

**Statement by**  
**Ms. Mizna Waheed**  
**Third Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Maldives to the UN and other**  
**International Organisations at Geneva**  
**Item 3: General Debate**  
**54<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council**  
**20 September 2023**

Thank you, Mr. President.

The foreign policy of Maldives is based on three core pillars: protecting human rights; promoting democracy and good governance; and combating climate change. As such, we place human rights at the forefront of our democratic aspirations. Despite the numerous challenges we face as a Small Island Developing State, the Maldives has made significant strides in upholding and protecting human rights at both domestic and international contexts.

Mr. President,

The Government of Maldives is committed to democratic principles through comprehensive legislative reforms and policies. For instance, this July, we ratified the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance . We are committed to fulfilling our international obligations under this Convention and the seven other core international human rights treaties to which Maldives is a state party.

Mr. President,

We can only achieve sustainable development by promoting the rights of each individual in our societies. This means, taking care of our youth, supporting micro, small and medium enterprises, taking care of our older persons and society's well-being. In this regard, in February 2019 the Government introduced "Free Education Scheme for Degree Students" that offers our youth the opportunity to complete their undergraduate first degree without a financial burden. So far, over 6,500 students have graduated under this scheme. We have also launched a Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) Bank, to support young entrepreneurs, women and persons with disabilities, to enhance their contribution and participation in nation building. While we continue to strengthen primary healthcare services throughout the country, we are pleased to note that mental health facilities and child development centers have been established in different regions within the country.

Mr. President,

As we commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the 30th Anniversary of Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) this year, we reaffirm our commitment to respect, uphold and promote fundamental human rights enshrined in the Declarations. At this critical juncture, we call on the international community for greater multilateral cooperation and collaborative efforts in promoting human rights. The Maldives stands ready to work constructively and meaningfully with our international partners to further advance and build upon the accomplishments we have achieved so far.

I thank you.