



Statement by H.E. Ms. Iruthisham Adam
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives
In response to Opening Statement of Ms. Navanethem Pillay,
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Geneva, 13 September 2010

Thank you Mr. President,

Mr. President, I would like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of office as President of the Human Rights Council. I can assure you of the full support of the Maldives delegation.

Mr. President,

The Maldives delegation would like to thank the High Commissioner for her informative and insightful statement.

This is the Maldives' first session as a member of the Council, indeed it is the first time we have sat as a member of any of the major UN bodies. Our decision to prioritise membership of this assembly was a considered one, and reflects the high importance that the Maldives attaches to human rights. As delegates in this room will be aware, the current Government of the Maldives began life as a pro-democracy, pro-human rights movement, and our President, ~~H.E. Mr. Mohamed Nasheed~~, was a former Amnesty Prisoner of Conscience. Our commitment to promoting and protecting human rights is therefore clear, and it is a commitment that we look forward to bringing to bear throughout our term of membership.



The Maldives believes that the Council must be a forum that can respond to important human rights situations as they emerge, and be a body that bases its work on engagement, cooperation and dialogue with concerned States. With this in mind, the Maldives concurs with the High Commissioner's comments that, as part of the Human Rights Council Review process, we must enhance our ability to deal with chronic human rights situations *and* demonstrate that our interventions have real on-the-ground impacts and results. To our mind, the way to do so is to improve our capacity to reach-out to the country concerned, to invite them to engage meaningfully with us, and to work with them to address such situations.

My delegation would therefore like to ask the High Commissioner whether her Office intends to submit proposals, as part of the Council review process, on how the Council can improve our responsiveness and effectiveness in dealing with pressing human rights situations around the world.

The Maldives also concurs with the High Commissioner that election times are especially important as moments when the international community must be vigilant and closely engaged, both in order to protect human rights defenders, and to ensure that the democratic rights of the people of a country are fully respected. The Maldives national elections in 2008 were a crucial turning-point for human rights in the country, and we see the November's elections in Myanmar as a similarly important opportunity, and as a moment when the international human rights community should be closely engaged in helping the country fulfill the civil and political rights of its people.

I would therefore like to ask the High Commissioner what steps her Office is taking to reach out to and work with the authorities in Myanmar to ensure that November's elections are free and fair and that they reflect the will of the people.

Finally Mr. President,



I would like to briefly update the High Commissioner and the Council on recent developments in the Maldives.

As I have already mentioned, the Maldives only recently began its democratic transition. In 2008, the Maldives ratified a new Constitution which, for the first time, guarantees the full range of human rights and fundamental freedoms; ~~and, later that year, the country held its first-ever free and fair democratic elections.~~ Since then, the new Government has worked tirelessly to consolidate democracy and to give life and meaning to the rights written down in law.

However, this has not always been easy. Many of the institutions, mechanisms and concepts introduced by the 2008 Constitution are new to the Maldives and all of us, including decision-makers and the general population, are still adapting and learning. A particular challenge is to understand and respect the separation of powers between the three branches of government. Similarly, strengthening rule of law and rooting out corruption are also areas of priority focus.

In this situation, the international community has a crucial role to play. Already we have invited the Inter Parliamentary Union to assist us more clearly delineate the separation and balance of powers between the executive and the legislative, and this week a high-level mission by the International Commission of Jurists, led by two former human rights Special Rapporteurs, is in the Maldives as a first step towards strengthening judicial independence and accountability.

Thank you.