

**Statement by H E Ms Iruthisham Adam, Permanent Representative of  
Maldives: Annual Discussion on Women's Rights  
10 June 2011**

Thank You Mr. President,

Let me at the outset thank the panellists for their presentations and positive contributions to today's discussion.

The Maldives denounces violence against women in all forms, and is committed to its complete elimination as an integral aspect of the realization of our goal to protect the human rights of all.

As the Panellists have highlighted the Maldives acknowledges the gravity of this issue, as it is a direct product of the systematic discrimination against women which permeates all cultures and societies. This belief has been reinforced through the findings of High Commissioner on her enlightening report on practices and efforts aimed at preventing violence against women, contained in document A/HRC/17/23. The majority of countries have reported that one of the most efficient mechanisms for combating violence against women has been a comprehensive domestic legal framework. The compilation demonstrates that the key to prevention is premised on identifying the root causes and addressing these underlying determinants.

Mr. President,

The Maldives deplores those who resort to excuses of religion and culture to condone abuse against women. There is no justification to deny women their rightful place in private and in public, as the equal partners of our society. Several debates on the deconstruction of religious and cultural roadblocks have ensued over the years but have not received a voice within some state apparatuses and societies. It is our conviction that the same religion that fundamentalists are misinterpreting to violate the physical and mental integrity of women, infact offers protection and security for all women.

There is an inherent friction between the State and the religious authorities. But the danger arises when state institutions succumb to fundamentalist interpretations provided by a patriarchal religious clergy and deny the whole truth. There is no faith in this world that is not based on compassion, justice and respect. When explored and given a voice, these same faiths offer powerful resources for strength and courage as well as benevolence and righteousness. I say to the Panel it is time that we reconstruct the debate and offer a safety net to all women.

Hence, from this standpoint, the Maldives cannot put its name to any document that paves the way for politicised religious interpretations to control women's bodies and abuse their physical integrity. To go down that road is beyond the minimum bar of basic decency.

Mr. President,

It is true that the Council has a role to play in contributing to the debate on combating violence against women by providing a platform and by taking comprehensive steps towards the protection of the rights of women. It is in this regard, that the Maldives whole-heartedly supported and cosponsored the creation of the Working Group on the Issue of Discrimination against Women in Law and Practice in September last year and look forward to engaging with the Working Group.

But there is no advantage in a discussion by States that veil some of the fundamentals of violence against women. We deeply regret the persistence of this, for as long as the disempowerment of women is allowed to continue, we are limiting society's potential by half.

I thankyou Mr. President