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Permanent Mission of the Republic of Maldives
to the United Nations Office at Geneva

**Statement to be delivered by Ms. Khadeeja Najeeha, Assistant Director, Ministry
of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives
on the annual discussion on integration of women : Empowerment of Women**

18 September 2012

Thank you Madam President,

The Maldives delegation welcomes the annual discussion on gender integration. We are encouraged by the increased attention paid by the council to this matter. We would also like to thank all the distinguished panellists for their presentations this morning.

The Maldives government attaches high priority to the empowerment of women. Maldives women have always enjoyed higher social status and greater political and social freedom. Today, women have parity with men in life expectancy, literacy and access to primary and secondary education.

The Maldives firmly believes that empowerment of women must include a three pronged approach, that promotes gender equality on the economic, political and social levels. In the Maldives, discrimination, vulnerability to domestic violence, and loss of some family oriented social benefits that hinders the full participation of women still persists. The root cause of many of such problems remains due to the exceedingly low parliamentary representation by women members to promote appropriate legislative mechanisms in place to protect the rights of women in our society. The Government, nevertheless is committed to promote women's active engagement in leadership roles and decision-making at every level and aspects of the society.

Madam President,

I am pleased to report that a number of positive changes are taking place under the Agenda for Reform and Democratisation launched by the Government in 2004. One major achievement in the new constitution has been the removal of the gender bar on women running for President. Another important milestone has been the appointment of the first-ever female judges in 2006. More recently, President Waheed has created a new Ministry of Gender, Family and Human Rights in February this year with the mandate to streamline the gender mainstreaming, promotion of women's rights and protect human rights in the country. The Maldives has also ratified the first ever domestic violence bill after being approved by the parliament in April this year. The bill ensures that victims of domestic violence, especially women are given adequate protection and safeguards to prevent domestic violence through law enforcement and rehabilitation of offenders. The



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operationalization of a shelter in Villingili for women who are victims of domestic violence is also underway. Moreover, there are three bills related to gender equality and women empowerment currently on the drafting stages. These bills are gender equality bill, alimony rights bill and women reservations bill.

Finally, the Maldives elected as a member of the 2013 Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women to the UN body, will use this membership to contribute to the work of the organization in meeting the needs of women in the Maldives and all around the world.

I thank you!.
