



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

**Statement by Ms. Rishfa Rasheed,
First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Maldives
to the United Nations Offices in Geneva**

**At the Clustered Interactive Dialogue with
Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights and
Working Group on Discrimination Against Women in Law and in Practice**

**Agenda Item 3
At the 23rd Session of United Nations Human Rights Council
Geneva, 31 May 2013**

Thank you, Mr. President.

I would like to thank the Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights for the Report and the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women, for their report at this Session.

I thank the OHCHR for appreciating the efforts Maldives has made in amending discriminatory nationality provisions in laws, as noted in the Report of the OHCHR on discrimination against women on nationality-related matters, including the impact on children.

The Maldives would like to thank the Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights for her report, which focuses on the multi-faceted ways in which the right to the freedom for artistic expression and creativity.

Mr. President

The Maldives welcomes the Report of the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women in political and public life, which is of special importance to my



delegation. As we mark the twentieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, promoting women's rights and eliminating discrimination against women, has become even more important. Recent events around the world where women have stood alongside men, demanding their rights, have proven this necessity.

Maldives has one of the highest rates of female-headed households in the world. However, women in the political and public life, still continue to be a mere fraction compared with men. To promote women into public life, the Government has implemented a National Gender Equality Policy, working through a dual process of mainstreaming gender in all areas, and strategic action to empower and advance women. Furthermore, few weeks ago, a national council was established to reform and strengthen the Government's framework for promoting gender equality and to protect and advance rights of all vulnerable groups.

The Maldives is party to a number of international legal frameworks aimed at the preservation of human rights and the rights of women. However, much work on domestic legislation corresponding to this are still pending. Due to the lack of financial and technical resources, the speed of the reform process is slow. As a country in political transition, we believe that women can play a stronger role in integrating a gender perspective into policy and decision-making.

Mr. President

Under the Constitution of the Maldives, all persons are guaranteed the same rights and freedoms. Women employees receive equal pay as that of men. Self-employed home-based women dominate a large percentage of informal economic sector. However, women are under-represented in the Parliament,



political parties, senior posts in the private sector, and decision-making level of the Government at national and local level.

Some of the challenges we face in bringing more women into the limelight of public and political life is the lack of access to quality education in local communities and the hesitancy of families to send the girl child away for studies, as well as the basic stereotyping of the role of women as family-makers. Women who engage in politics and are involved in public life often face challenges within the society, as they are perceived to undermine the traditional notions of the private life. Although effective mechanisms exist for maternal leave, traditional values and lack of childcare support systems often force many young ambitious women to choose family over career.

The Maldives fully endorses the Working Groups view that there can be no true democracy without women's full and equal participation. The right to equal representation remains a challenge but a priority of the Government. Effective policy measures, legislative frameworks, and innovative strategies for capacity building and leadership training need to be put in place to empower women to come out of their comfort zone and contribute in a more direct manner to the development of the nation.

Thank you Mr President