



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

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**Agenda Item 3: Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the
Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally
sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes and the
Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation
11 September 2013**

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

Check Against Delivery

Thank you, Mr. Vice President

The Maldives welcomes the reports presented to the Council by the Special Rapporteurs and express appreciation for their interactive dialogue this afternoon.

Given the Maldives' geography, although surrounded by water, access to safe drinking water and sanitation remains a crucial issue in the Maldives. The increasing number of the population and the vulnerability of our small and low-lying islands, faced with the challenges of climate change make these issues even more relevant to our nation. Traditionally Maldivians have relied on ground water supplies as drinking water, but only 28% of households have sustainable supply of safe water throughout the year, including the dry season. Rainwater harvesting was also a common method of water storage practiced until recently.

However, during recent years due to climate change, the monsoons have caused contamination of the water supplies in many parts of the country. In 2012 alone during monsoons, safe drinking water had to be supplied to over 37 island communities. Also, after the 2004 tsunami, groundwater supplies have been

contaminated rendering the island communities helpless not only to access freshwater but also causing soil infertility thus destroying the livelihood of many islanders.

To address these issues, the Government has been taking special measures to provide safe drinking water to these communities, which had put a heavy burden on the GDP of the nation. To add to this, as water resources are often linked to sanitation, the facilities in the islands are lower than acceptable standards. Hence, the Government with the aid of its international donors has been working to improve the sanitation facilities and sewerage systems in the country.

We would also like to take note of your recent visit to fellow SIDS, Tuvalu and Kiribati and your reports on those country visits. As a country that heavily relies on its ecosystem, through fisheries and tourism sector for economic growth, Maldives like many SIDS, engage in both these issues from the point of negative implications to enjoyment of fundamental human rights.

Mr. Vice President

In Maldives, although some regulations are in place for the receipt of hazardous materials, these regulations do not include, the receipt of many materials including asbestos, which is used in many households as a roofing material. There is little distinction between general waste management and waste management of hazardous substances. To address this at a national level, policies, regulations and monitoring mechanisms still need to be put in place.

Currently, most islands have waste collection areas but there are no means of collecting or processing. Thus there is no separation of hazardous waste from general waste. With the assistance of the World Bank and other donors, Maldives had recently started different waste management pilot project, which would also look into the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes. Since Maldives relies heavily on tourism, it is important to address this issue for the sustainability of the already vulnerable islands of the nation.

As we discuss the mandate on hazardous waste management, the most crucial issue here today is the call for international support to address the adverse impacts on environment and the limitations on hazardous waste management. Many islands in Maldives do not practice proper management and disposal techniques, due to a lack of awareness, accessibility and affordability of mechanisms.

On a final note, let me reiterate the full commitment of Maldives for the inclusion of the progressive realization, without discrimination, and addressing inequities and inequalities for safe drinking water and sanitation in the post-2015 development agenda.

Thank you Mr. Vice President
