



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

24th Session of United Nations Human Rights Council
Geneva, 9 – 27 September 2013

**Agenda Item 8: General Debate on Follow-up to and Implementation of the
Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
23 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 President

In 1993, a 7000-delegate conference adopted the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, agreeing that no more would any human being suffer any injustice, and emphasizing that economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights are universal, indivisible and entitled to each and every human being, irrespective of gender, colour, race, religion, or any belief.

Twenty years later today, we are still trying to achieve that. Despite numerous efforts, commitment at all levels and millions of dollars spent, basic human rights are still unheard of in parts of this world. One of the best legacies of Vienna is the recommendation to create the post of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Office of the High Commissioner has brought to light many issues and addressed violations of human rights. Despite emerging challenges every day, the Office has come a long way, passed many milestones and achieved targets. It continues to be a beacon of hope for millions of people around the globe and we applaud this work, and the Maldives is privileged to be a part of it.

One of the most important provisions of the Declaration is the equal status and human rights of women that it calls for. Although predominantly the Maldives has been a patriarchal society, women, had for centuries, played a strong role in the island communities, but rarely on equal status as men. The integration and mainstreaming of women's rights, and gender equality is one of the main priorities of the Government. The Maldives believes in the importance of participation of women in the sustainable development of the nation.

Mr. President

As the High Commissioner had noted in her statement last week, at the Annual Discussion on Integration of a Gender Perspective, out of over, 23000 recommendations made during the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) 17% were on women's rights and gender issues. It not only shows the massive amount of work that needs to be done in terms of women's rights, but it also shows the interest of member states for the promotion of women's rights. The Maldives believes that UPR recommendations and their implementation is one important step to achieving women's equality.

The Annual Discussion this Session on the contribution of Civil Society for integrating a gender perspective was very useful. As we had stated at that discussion, the Maldives believes that civil society actors can play an active role in reaching out to women on a grass-root level and providing the human rights education necessary, for their empowerment. It is the civil society that works with women at community level, national and even regional level, together in the development process. The Maldives encourages more civil society participation in all sectors of development, and call on them especially to integrate a gender perspective into the work that they do.

Finally, Mr. President, the Maldives understand that there are significant challenges and financial constraints for developing countries, especially LDCs and SIDS, to achieve what we have targeted for when we adopted the VDPA. In order to move forward, this Council and Member States need to enhance further its efforts for gender mainstreaming and women's equal participation, for with the empowerment of women, there is no doubt that implementation of VDPA and the full enjoyment of human rights by all will not be a distant dream.

I thank you Mr President.