

Maldives 1-12-08 PM

Third Session of the UPR Working Group

Bahamas

Thank you Mr. President.

The Maldives delegation would like to warmly welcome our friends from the Bahamas to this Third Session of the UPR Working Group. It is a particular pleasure for the Maldives to see its close friend, and fellow Member of the Alliance of Small Island States and the Commonwealth, here in Geneva. We congratulate them on their National Report and express our hope that today's experience will be a rewarding one.

The National Report illustrates the proud heritage of a country which is the world's Second Oldest Parliamentary Democracy. The Report also effectively highlights one of the main human rights challenges facing Small Island States like the Bahamas and the Maldives, namely human and technical capacity constraints.

Mr. President,

Considering these resource constraints, it is vital that relevant international organizations and donor states engage positively and constructively to help the Bahamas undertake the reforms that it itself identifies as imperative in its own National Report. In the human rights field, there are considerable resources that can be made available to the Bahamas in order to strengthen national policy, institutions and practice. For example, United Nations Special Rapporteurs can offer invaluable, impartial expert advice in areas such as women's rights, detention procedures and conditions, and juvenile justice. Likewise, human rights Treaty Body recommendations can act as a catalyst and guide to encourage international donors and agencies, including the OHCHR, to engage and extend much-needed financial and technical assistance.

With these points in mind, the Maldives warmly welcomes the Government's stated intention to accede to the ICCPR and the ICESCR.

Turning to our questions, the Maldives would like to know whether the Bahamas is also considering signing the Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol.

The Maldives would also be interested to know whether the Government has considered engaging with selected UN Special Procedures such as the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. Or indeed, whether the Government has considered extending a Standing Invitation to Special Procedures in general.

Finally, the OHCHR's Compilation Report correctly notes the vulnerability of Small Island States like the Bahamas to climate change, and associated rises in sea-levels and increases in extreme weather events such as hurricanes. The Maldives would be interested to hear how climate change and its consequences is effecting important human rights in the Bahamas such as the right to adequate housing, the right to food, the right to water, and the right to life.

Thank you Mr. President.