



Statement by

His Excellency Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Mohamed

**Permanent Representative,
Republic of Maldives**

at the

Seventh Session

of the

**Human Rights Council of the
United Nations**

under

Agenda Item 3

11th March 2008



Thank you Mr. President,

The Maldives delegation would like to thank all the Special Rapporteurs for their reports.

Regarding the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. Ligabo, the Maldives delegation is pleased to note that the Special Rapporteur has responded favourably to the Maldives Government's invitation to visit the country in April of this year.

Mr. Ligabo's visit comes at an extremely opportune time. Strengthening press freedom is one of the key pillars of the Government's current democratic and human rights Reform Agenda. A free press is often regarded as the "fourth estate" of liberal democracy and the Maldives Government has consistently taken the view that political modernisation must go hand-in-hand with steps to create a strong, independent and responsible media. With this in mind, the Roadmap for the Reform Agenda identifies four key Bills and a related code of conduct - together constituting the "Media Reform Package" - which together are designed to define the rights and responsibilities of the free media and enshrine these rights and responsibilities in legislation that is fully compliant with international standards and norms.

It is hoped that this Media Reform Package will further boost the already blossoming free press in the Maldives. Six daily newspapers and thirteen magazines are currently in circulation among a population of only 300,000 people. These publications represent a broad cross-section of political and other views. The Government has also moved forward with opening radio spectrum



radio & television

for private broadcasting ^{As a} with the result that Maldivians can now access a range of private television and radio stations, and shortly will have access to a private television station.

The Maldives Government is looking forward to working with Mr. Ligabo over the coming months to further promote and consolidate these positive changes, and thereby to help realise our common goal of a free, vibrant and responsible media in the Maldives.

Thank you Mr. President.