

FIJI

Thank you Mr. President,

The Maldives would like to welcome the delegation of Fiji to Geneva.

Mr. President,

As a Small Island State which has recently undergone profound political change, the Maldives understands the challenges and difficulties faced by Fiji and would like to strongly encourage the country to implement, speedily and fully, the reforms that it itself has admitted are necessary.

It is clear from the three reports that a lack of trust, both within Fiji and between Fiji and the international community, is a major barrier to progress. With this in mind, the Maldives would offer the following recommendations based on its own recent experience:

1. Fiji should aim to bring forward its reform programme in order to restore democracy as soon as possible. The Maldives has read with interest the reasons for delaying elections until 2014, and understands the concerns about stability, but the simple fact is that without democracy, the constitutional reform process will be severely impeded.
2. Fiji should consider establishing, as soon as possible in 2010, a full constitutional assembly that will shape the future of Fiji, for Fijians and by Fijians.
3. Fiji should consider acceding to the major human rights conventions as a sign of intent and as a confidence-building measure.

4. Fiji should consider extending a standing invitation to Special Procedures to visit and help with the reforms. Special Procedures should not be seen as a threat but as a means of generating better understanding about the challenges faced by Fiji, and a means of channelling international support.

The Maldives also strongly recommends that the international community play its part and show its good-will by beginning from a position where it believes in and expresses support for democratic and human rights reform in Fiji. Instead of condemning, the international community must extend assistance and work with Fijians to bring about the reforms that Fiji itself knows are necessary.

Thank you.