

**Statement by H.E. Ms. Iruthisham Adam
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Maldives
Responding to the Annual Report of the High Commissioner**

We would also like to
Thank you Mr. President and ~~many~~ *many* thanks to the High Commissioner for her comprehensive report.

discrimination
The Statement emphasises the importance that the Office of the High Commissioner attaches to countering discrimination, including based on gender and disability.

In that regard, I am pleased to inform the High Commissioner about a number of developments in the Maldives.

First, the People's Majlis today endorsed the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, significantly strengthening the human rights safeguards for disabled persons. During the course of 2010, the Government will resubmit a comprehensive Disabilities Bill giving force to those rights contained in the Convention.

Second, the Government last week announced that it would be soon withdrawing its reservation under Article 7 of CEDAW, following the ratification of the new Constitution which gives equal political rights to women running for high political office. A Bill seeking parliamentary approval for the withdrawal has been drafted and will be presented to the Majlis shortly.

The Maldives is also currently working on specific domestic legislation to implement the principles, rights and obligations contained in CEDAW. The Human Rights Commission of the Maldives is currently assisting the Attorney General's Office to translate CEDAW into our local language, Dhivehi, as a first step towards creating a Women's Rights Bill. A Sexual Harassment Bill is also expected in 2010 while a Bill on Violence against Women has already been tabled.

Third, and also in the area of women's rights, the Maldives has begun a programme to mainstream gender equality across all government actions and policies. In this regard, a new gender mainstreaming strategy has been endorsed by the Cabinet and was announced by the President on International Women's Day 2009. Under the strategy, a coordination unit within the President's Office will monitor all governmental activities and liaise with assigned Gender Focal Points (deputy minister-level) in each ministry to ensure that all policies and programmes promote gender equality. All Cabinet Papers presented by Ministers must now include a gender impact perspective.

Mr. President, *Madam High Commissioner*

The Government sees all these Bills and programmes as vitally important as women and disabled persons continue to face unacceptable levels of discrimination in all walks of life. The Maldives looks forward to updating the High Commissioner on progress in this regard.

Thank you.

