

ABDUL GHAFUUR MOHAMMED .

14/05/08

MALDIVES

Thank you Mr. President.

The Maldives delegation would like to warmly welcome our friends from Tonga to this Second Session of the UPR Working Group. We believe that the occasion is extremely important as Tonga is the first Small Island Developing State to be reviewed under the UPR. We congratulate them on this fact and express our hope that the experience will be a rewarding one.

The Maldives also congratulates Tonga on their excellent national report which, while emphasizing the country's proud history and cultural heritage, is nonetheless unreservedly forward-looking.

As the Government of Tonga makes clear throughout the report, two of the key challenges it faces are to strengthen human rights protection while respecting and promoting its proud cultural heritage; and secondly to take such steps in the face of extreme human and technical resource constraints. Indeed, such challenges are common to many Small Island States and we urge Members of the Council to be sensitive to this fact when conducting today's Review.

Mr. President,

Considering the resource constraints faced by Small Island States such as Tonga, it is vital that relevant international organizations and donor states engage positively and constructively to help the country 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 Tonga 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 press freedom, judicial independence, and women's rights. 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 would like to know more about Tonga's views regarding the value of acceding to the ICCPR and the ICESCR as part of the constitutional review process; and secondly whether the Government has considered engaging with selected UN Special Rapporteurs in order to assist with the commendable goal, outlined in the national report, of reviewing human rights responsibilities, freedoms and obligations as part of the ongoing democratic reform programme.

Thank you Mr. President.