

**Statement by**

**His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Khaleel**

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**Item 1: High-Level Segment**

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Mr. President, Madam High Commissioner,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

At the outset I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as the President of the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council. I wish you and your team a successful year ahead. Rest assured, as in previous sessions the Maldives will continue to extend its full support to the Council under your able leadership.

Excellencies,

It will soon be two years since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Fortunately, the Maldives is on the road to recovery with strong public health and economic measures. More than 80% of the eligible population has been vaccinated, irrespective of their legal status or nationality. To achieve similar success on a global scale, it is important that the international community ensures equitable and affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Excellencies,

The Maldives' foreign policy is based on three pillars: defending human rights, upholding the principles of democracy and good governance, and climate change. Since the adoption of the new constitution in 2008, the Maldives has passionately advocated for human rights. Together with other small states, we have worked tirelessly to bring global attention to the existential threat of climate change and its effects on the full enjoyment of human rights.

The Maldives has been involved with a series of resolutions on human rights and climate change over the years, including early mandates such as Resolution 19/10, establishing the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment. We are also proud to have been a lead cosponsor of the Resolution 48/13. Through this landmark resolution, for the first time, the Council recognises the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right. The adoption of Resolution 48/14 on the creation of a Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change is further testament to the importance this Council attaches to the human rights dimensions of climate change.

Excellencies,

Beyond advocating for environmental measures, the Maldives is very engaged with human rights mechanisms on a broader scale. We are pleased to note that the Maldives' third cycle Universal Periodic Review was conducted with the wide participation of the members of the Council in 2020. This past year, the Maldives also completed our sixth periodic report before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Excellencies,

The Maldives is a firm believer in the multilateral system and its importance for promoting peace and security. In this regard, we express our deep concern on the escalating humanitarian situation in Ukraine and call on all concerned parties to uphold their obligations under international human rights law and humanitarian law. We encourage the global community to engage in constructive dialogue pursuant to the United Nations Charter to ensure a swift and peaceful resolution to the conflict.

We also wish to highlight our deep distress about the plight of the Palestinian people, particularly in the occupied territories. We will continue to support the right to a sovereign and independent Palestinian State.

Excellencies,

The Human Rights Council is a fundamental pillar of the international system. It is exceptionally critical now, as we strive to place human rights at the centre of the global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. We are committed to engaging constructively with the Council and promoting diversity, inclusivity and universality in the work of the Council. Since 2006, we have extended a standing invitation to all thematic special procedures mandate holders. Through this invitation, the Maldives has hosted the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights and the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism will visit the Maldives this year, and we look forward to hosting other mandate holders soon.

The Maldives is fully committed to upholding the rule of law, strengthening democratic institutions and promoting good governance. We have learnt greatly

from our democratic journey and believe that our own experience will provide a valuable perspective that is beneficial to this Council, especially from the point of view of a Small Island Developing State. It is in this spirit that the Maldives offers itself as a candidate for the membership of the Human Rights Council for the term 2023-2025. We are committed to consolidating democracy at home and working towards a more inclusive, constructive, and diverse Council. We pledge to offer a voice for the voiceless, the marginalized, and the smallest countries, to ensure that no one is left behind.

I thank you.