

Statement by
His Excellency Dr Asim Ahmed
Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the Maldives to the
United Nations and other International Organizations at Geneva
Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on Discrimination
against Women and Girls
53rd Session of the Human Rights Council
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Thank you, Madam Vice President,

The Maldives extends its appreciation to the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls for the comprehensive report on its visit to the Maldives from 11 to 22 September 2022. We further welcome the consultative approach adopted by the Working Group in formulating this report.

The Government of Maldives attaches great importance to constructively engage with the Special Procedures Mandate Holders and other international human rights mechanisms established by the United Nations to promote and protect human rights globally. In this spirit, we would like to once again reiterate the Standing Invitation extended to all Special Procedures Mandate Holders in 2019.

Madam Vice President,

The Working Group has noted the positive developments the Government has made in the promotion and protection of women's rights. As a key priority of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih's administration, over the past four years, the Government has remained committed to achieving gender equality and ensuring the protection of women's rights in the country as accorded under our national

laws, and through our international human rights obligations, including the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Last year, we launched the National Gender Equality Action Plan; a framework outlining the key strategies that will guide the fulfilment of the commitments made by the Government on gender equality, for a five-year period from 2022 to 2026. The Action Plan complements the Government's Strategic Action Plan 2019-2023, and the Sustainable Development Goal 5. We are confident that the concerted efforts of Government agencies through this framework will continue to deliver measurable actions to empower women and girls.

We further recognise the crucial need to strengthen our legislative frameworks by aligning them with our international obligations. It was in this spirit that the Maldives fully withdrew its reservations to paragraphs 1 (b), (e), (g) and (h) and paragraph 2 of Article 16 of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In its report, the Working Group had also acknowledged various other legislative and policy initiatives of the Government to promote women and girl's rights. This includes the enactment of the new Child Rights Protection Act which came into force in February 2020, safeguarding children including girls from all forms of discrimination, exploitation and abuse, and the amendments brought about to the Decentralization Act in 2019, which introduced electoral quotas.

The Government is making significant efforts at increasing the representation of women in decision-making and leadership positions at national and local levels. As a result, today, one-third of the current cabinet consists of female ministers. Similarly, we are proud that for the first time, we have achieved gender parity among the Maldivian Heads of Missions, and that 39.8 percent of island council

seats are represented by women following the allocation of one-third of council seats to women.

Madam Vice President,

We would like to take this opportunity to also call the Council's attention the inherent vulnerabilities faced by the Maldives as a Small Island Developing State riddled with the climate crisis, resource constraints and challenges associated with our unique geography. These crises disproportionately affect women and girls from all walks of life and is rightfully acknowledged by the Working Group in its report.

We also take note of the Working Group's concerns regarding the many socio-cultural challenges that hinder the effective implementation of policies focusing on the advancement of women's rights in both the public and political sphere. To this end, the Government is currently reviewing national legislations including the Family Law.

Madam Vice President,

We take note of the recommendations outlined in the Working Group's report and assure the Council that the Government of Maldives would give due consideration to bridge the identified gaps and to improve the lives of women and girls across the country, including those in vulnerable situations. We are also pleased to share that some of the actions proposed by the Working Group have already been implemented by the Government, such as elimination of the tax imposed on feminine hygiene products to enhance their access.

The Maldives stands ready to engage closely with the Working Group and all our international and regional partners in developing the necessary capacity and resources to address the important issues brought to light by the Working Group.

Before concluding, we would like to reaffirm the unwavering commitment of the Government of Maldives to eliminate all forms discrimination against women and girls and to uphold our obligations under domestic and international human rights law.

I thank you.