

Statement by

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Convention against Torture Initiative Side Event

**Theme: Preventing Torture in Small Island Developing States: The Role of
the UN Convention against Torture**

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Excellencies and distinguished colleagues,

Let me begin by thanking CTI for the opportunity to speak on this very important topic. Protecting all individuals from cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment and punishment, including torture, is fundamental to securing all universal rights and freedoms.

The Maldives remains committed to ensuring protection from torture and ill-treatment, as enshrined in the Maldivian Constitution, and in line with the UN Charter, and the Convention against Torture which we acceded on 20 April 2004.

Distinguished colleagues,

In the Maldives, like many of our fellow Small Island Developing States, we grapple with budgetary constraints, lack of adequately trained professionals, lack of materials and resources. These challenges are well known. We are all here today because we understand these challenges and are committed to overcoming them to

promote and uphold human rights. Let us speak candidly about our successes and our obstacles so that we can achieve universal ratification.

As we navigate the challenges, we are grateful for the support of CTI and international organisations, who have been generous in providing technical support and sharing their knowledge and best practices. Despite the difficulties, we have continued to persevere, and our efforts are already bearing fruit.

In the Maldives, the Inspector of Correctional Service operates as an independent oversight function to investigate prison conditions and complaints from detainees and their families. Over the past four years, we have steadily worked to increase the ICS's unfettered access to prisons.

Direct communications with prisoners are now held through confidential channels to ensure uncensored communication. The reforms have increased public awareness and trust in the ICS. On this note, let me emphasize the important role played by the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives, which has access to prison facilities whenever they require.

In addition, work is underway to train correctional officers on the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners also known as the Nelson Mandela Rules. We have also worked on cultivating a culture of respect for human rights in the Maldives Police Service through the Maldives Police Services Act, which creates mandatory obligations to respect and protect fundamental rights. We hold all actors in the system to account and have created oversight functions and reporting obligations for the Ministry of Home Affairs and all state detention facilities.

We have also found great success in engaging deeply with the international multilateral system. On 26 December 2019, we recognized the individual complaint procedure of the UN Committee Against Torture. In the past two years, we were pleased to welcome the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. We have found the feedback and perspectives from these external voices valuable. We are currently engaged in implementing their recommendations. What we expect from these mandate holders is to not only identify the problems we have, but also work with us in finding and implementing solutions.

It is in this spirit of sharing experiences and advice that we look forward to hearing from our distinguished panellists today. We know that climate change is a threat multiplier that can limit resources, increase tensions, and foment conflict. I would be keen to hear the expert views of the panellists on how States can climate-proof their implementation of the Convention against Torture, to continue to protect human rights in this changing landscape.

Let me conclude by reassuring the Maldives full support to the work of the Convention Against Torture Initiative in achieving universal ratification of this important Convention.

Thank you.