

Statement by

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Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights

52nd Session of the Human Rights Council

13 March 2023

Thank you, Mr. President,

The Maldives extends its appreciation to the Special Rapporteur on counter terrorism and human rights for the comprehensive report on her visit to the Maldives from 15 to 24 May 2022. We wish to assure the Special Rapporteur that her recommendations are being carefully examined for appropriate implementation, in line with our Constitution, national laws and policies. We have also provided clarifications, where necessary, on certain issues highlighted in the Special Rapporteur's report, as contained in the Addendum.

Since President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih assumed Office in 2018, the Maldives has made numerous efforts to re-engage with the international human rights mechanisms and increase our efforts in fulfilling our international human rights obligations. It is in this spirit that we renewed our Standing Invitation to all special procedures mandate holders in 2019. On this note, allow me to thank the Special Rapporteur for accepting our invitation and for her constructive engagement with key interlocutors during her visit.

Mr. President,

The Government of Maldives strongly condemns and denounces all acts of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In this regard, the Government has taken significant steps to address the issue of extremism, including conducting various P/CVE programs and working with international and regional partners to enhance our counter-terrorism competency.

As rightly acknowledged in the Special Rapporteur's report, we have also adopted several policies, legislative amendments and established institutional bodies to improve our national response to threats of terrorism. In this regard, the National Counter Terrorism Centre was established in 2016 as the national focal point on all counter terrorism matters. In order to effectively administer the secretariat work of the National Security Council, the National Security Advisor's Office was set up in the President's Office. The Government is determined to increase coordination between ministries and agencies and improve accountability and transparency within the agencies, by working closely with independent watchdog institutions.

Mr. President,

The Maldives concurs with the Special Rapporteur's views that there is a need to ensure safety of civil society actors and human rights defenders in the country. To this end, the Government has enacted a new Associations Act in 2022, which aims to strengthen the governance of civil society and non-governmental organizations.

The Government has also undertaken efforts to strengthen the criminal justice system. The enactment of a new Evidence Act, which came into force in January this year, overhauls the outdated Evidence Act dating back to 1976. This new law sets out rules of evidence that are applicable in criminal, as well as civil proceedings,

and includes formalities and legalities involved in adducing evidence in proceedings, their admissibility, and special evidentiary rules related to electronic evidence. Further, the Presidential Commission on Deaths and Disappearances, along with expertise from international partners, is supporting Maldives Police Service on a Witness Protection Program.

Notably, the Commission itself has completed their investigation into the enforced disappearance of a Maldivian journalist and provided several systemic recommendations to prevent violent extremism and crime, in December last year. The Government will be undertaking the implementation of these recommendations, in collaboration with respective stakeholders. This is also largely indicative of our strong commitment to ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances.

Taking note of the concerns by the Special Rapporteur regarding operationalization of the repatriation process, we wish to give the assurance that the National Rehabilitation Centre will function as an administrative centre to rehabilitate and reintegrate children, women and adults who are designated as victims, based on assessments. The basis for institutionalisation is to ensure that everyone – especially children – are given proper care, education, and other services as necessary to empower them further before guaranteeing their successful reintegration into the community. Allow me to also highlight that the Child Rights Protection Act enacted in 2019, places a primary obligation over all State bodies to ensure that the best interests of the child is protected at all times.

Mr. President,

Despite the Government's commitment to take effectual measures to better address the issue of violent extremism and terrorism, we are faced with a number of challenges, including lack of financial resources and technical expertise. Therefore, the Maldives looks forward to engaging closely with the Special Rapporteur and all our international and regional partners to build our national capacity to address the issues identified in the report of the Special Rapporteur.

In closing, I would like to reaffirm that the Government of Maldives remains strongly resolute to undertake any and all steps necessary to counter violent extremism and terrorism, and also uphold our obligations under international human rights law.

I thank you.