

Statement by

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Mr. President,

Mr. High Commissioner,

Dear Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good afternoon to you all.

Seventy-five years is a blink of an eye in the scale of human history. Yet the progress we have made since 1948 is truly astounding. It was 75 years ago that the United Nations came together to affirm the innate rights of all human beings in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the years since, the Universal Declaration has given rise to a golden age of multilateralism.

The Universal Declaration recognised that all human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent. It sets out a path – a rights-based approach – towards freedom, equality, and dignity. It paved the way for a robust framework of over seventy human rights treaties, all based on a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.

On this 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration, we *can*, and we *must* reflect on the progresses achieved. We *must* reaffirm our commitment to keeping human rights at the heart of all our developmental efforts. To build a more just, resilient, and inclusive world.

Mr. President,

The value of the Universal Declaration rests in its true universality. Countries from around the world met in 1948. They shared their diverse perspectives. And they arrived at the core universal truth of humanity – that *we are all born free and equal in dignity and rights*.

To fully realise this simple truth of universal equality, to accomplish the mission of this Council, we must ensure all countries are given an equal voice. It is with this need for diversity and inclusion in mind that the Maldives is pleased to once again, serve as a member of this Council. We are also honoured to serve as the Vice President from the Asia Pacific group this year.

Mr. President,

The Maldives' foreign policy is premised on three core pillars: protecting human rights, promoting democracy and good governance, and combating climate change. These are the pillars that will underpin our engagement at this Council.

Since President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih assumed office in 2018, the Maldives has been on a path to strengthen democracy and good governance, at home, and abroad. We have renewed our commitment to democratic principles through extensive legislative reform and policy. This includes new laws to strengthen accountability for the judiciary, to secure the right to free association, and to protect the right to a fair trial. It also includes changes to enhance the independence and accountability of the Human Rights Council, efforts to enhance Transitional Justice, major reforms to the governance of Police through the Police Act, and a new Civil Procedures Act.

We are committed to the promotion and protection of human rights. This is why we have extended and reiterated standing invitations to all special procedures mandates holders in 2019. To date, we have received five mandate holders – despite the COVID travel restrictions! We believe this demonstrates our commitment to cooperate with special procedures mandate holders. As well as our commitment to promoting and protecting human rights at home.

During our Universal Periodic Review in 2020, the Maldives fully accepted 187 recommendations and partially accepted 5. We are continuously monitoring these, and other commitments made, under individual treaty body reviews through the National Mechanism for Reporting and Followup.

Mr President,

Enhancing inclusivity will underpin our priorities at the Council. Whether it is the participation of women, and young people. Or the participation of small states, or stakeholders.

This year, we are commemorating the 30th anniversary of the 1993 Vienna Conference on Human Rights. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action was a milestone in many aspects – but it was a watershed moment for women’s rights – with the universal acceptance that women’s rights are human rights.

I participated in this Conference, as a young diplomat. It instilled in me, the strong belief in gender equality. I am proud of the achievements we have made in empowering and promoting women’s rights in the Maldives.

The Decentralisation Act of the Maldives was amended in 2019 to allocate 30 percent of Local Council seats for women. On the international front, in 2020, we withdrew several reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In 2022, under the Maldivian presidency of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, we launched the UNGA Platform for Women Leaders. The Maldives also presented a resolution at the United Nations

General Assembly to establish the International Day of Women in Diplomacy, which garnered co-sponsorship from 191 Member States.

My early entry into the world of diplomacy, also showed me the importance of the inclusion of young people in decision making. All around the world, young people are doing incredible work, as agents of change. They are capable. They are committed. And they can lead. We must open spaces for their voice and their views.

I am also proud of the work we are doing to support delegations from Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. Last year, the Maldives and Mauritius worked as co-penholders with other like-minded countries, to put forward a resolution to strengthen the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund for SIDS and LDCs.

This resolution enjoyed the co-sponsorship of 177 States, reflecting broad cross-regional support and making it the most sponsored Human Rights Council resolution to date. We will continue efforts to find new ways to enhance the participation of small delegations from SIDS and LDCs during our time at the Council.

Mr. President,

Countries around the world are already facing the realities of the triple planetary crisis: pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss. Today's climate disasters are the symptoms. They will continue to intensify unless we address the root causes. They will continue to upend lives, disrupt livelihoods, and impact people's rights.

In 2021, this Council recognized for the first time that a clean, healthy, sustainable environment is a human right, and last year the United Nations General Assembly reaffirmed this right globally. It is now up to us to make this right a reality at the national level.

The Maldives contributes less than 0.01 percent of global carbon emissions, yet, we are among the first to face disproportionate effects of climate change. An equitable world cannot leave the smallest contributors to foot the bill of climate change alone.

We welcome the historic outcome of COP27 in Sharm el Sheikh to establish a dedicated fund to assist developing countries in responding to loss and damage from climate change. The Maldives looks forward to its operationalization at COP28 in Dubai and further multilateral efforts to protect our common future.

Mr President,

As a young democracy where half the population is under the age of 35, the Maldives' vision is naturally fixed on the future – the future of our citizens, of our democracy, and of our world.

Today, the Maldives recommits to promoting and protecting human rights, so that in 25 years we can celebrate a century of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable world.

I thank you, Mr. President.