

**Statement by**  
**Ms. Maryam Fathika Fayaz**  
**Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Maldives to the United Nations and other International Organisations at Geneva**  
**Panel Discussion on Cyberbullying Against Children**  
**54<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council**  
**27 September 2023**

Thank you, Mr. President.

In today's digital age, new technologies offer invaluable opportunities for children to learn and access a wide range of useful information that would shape their futures. However, the same technology also exposes our children to new risks and threats, such as cyberbullying and violence online, which can severely impact their well-being.

We echo the views shared by the esteemed panellists, and we recognise the urgent need to intensify our efforts in the fight against cyberbullying. It is imperative that we create a safe and secure digital space where our children can acquire valuable skills and knowledge to develop their full potential.

As a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the government has developed a new anti-bullying policy that promotes every child's right to learn and thrive in a safe, supportive school environment, in close coordination with UNICEF. To ensure its effectiveness, this policy emerged from 14 consultations involving nearly 500 individuals, including students of all age groups. These consultations were pivotal in identifying measures that students themselves believe would make a substantial difference in preventing bullying.

Moreover, the Government's strategic action plan outlines a multifaceted approach to strengthen existing efforts aimed at safeguarding children from bullying while also providing crucial support. A notable milestone in this regard is the launch of the Psychological First Aid Helpline for children on 16 June 2023, under the purview of the Ministry of Education. This helpline offers access to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support and early interventions to protect children from issues which arises from bullying. Furthermore, 1412, the toll-free Child Helpline established in 2009 is a national mechanism developed for reporting of cases of violence against children.

In conclusion, let me ask the panellists, at a time of online disinformation, what recommendations would you offer to Small Island Developing States like the Maldives to safeguard our children from the scourge of cyberbullying?

Thank you.