



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Maldives
to the United Nations Office at Geneva

**Statement by Ms. Rishfa Rasheed,
First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Maldives
to the United Nations Offices in Geneva**

**At the Clustered Interactive Dialogue with
Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights and
Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children**

**At the 23rd Session of United Nations Human Rights Council
Geneva, 28 May 2013**

Thank you, Madam President.

I would like to thank the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Ms. Magdalena Sepulveda Carmonas and the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Ms. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo for presenting their annual reports.

The Maldives delegation welcomes the Report of the Special Rapporteur, Ms. Carmonas, and acknowledges her efforts on emphasizing the importance of participation of persons living in extreme poverty to fully associating in society and decision-making. It is a fundamental human right that must be respected by all. The right to participation also empowers and builds trust and confidence required for the progress and development of a society.

It is the responsibility of states to ensure all citizens can voice their opinions on decisions concerning their lives, without fear. Equality is the cornerstone of the discourse on human rights. Appropriate laws, policies and institutions should be established, available and affordable for everyone. NGOs and other organisations can also play an important role in facilitating the participation of people living in



poverty, by enhancing critical thinking, and creating opportunities and building confidences.

As stated in the report, the Maldives believes that Governments play a key role in ensuring participation of people from all communities in making decisions. Resources must be allocated to support this process and improve capacity of the people. We understand the economic factors and recent increase in number of disasters around the world, burden the already strained financial resources of most countries. It is small island states that are most affected by these disasters. Vulnerable groups in these states, such as women and children, especially under extreme poverty, are forced to resort to means that are often more degrading, further exacerbating the situation. Hence, while we prepare for the post-2015 development agenda, it is important to ensure human rights are enjoyed by everyone, and special consideration is given to those living in extreme poverty to improve their situations.

Mr. President.

The Maldives fully agrees with the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, on the need for integrating a human rights based approach in measures aimed at discouraging the demand for exploitation that leads to human trafficking. One root cause for trafficking in persons, especially women and children, is the demand for services that they are forced to provide, mainly sexual and labour exploitation and addressing these issues, which is very well highlighted in the report.

As noted in the report, the progress in bringing an end to this demeaning act of transnational crime is slow. In the domestic sphere, Maldives is a destination country for trafficked victims, who come to join the immigrant labour force, often under false assumptions and paying high fees to the traffickers. To address



this issue, Government has drawn up an Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan and created an Anti-Human Trafficking Unit that has been allocated with the necessary financial and human resources. A safe shelter for female victims of trafficking has also been opened. In addition, an information dissemination campaign, in partnership with the media, aimed at creating public awareness against human trafficking is in effect. At the international level, the Maldives has acceded to the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and is currently completing its internal formalities to accede to its Protocol on Trafficking in Persons

However, many challenges still remain. A solid legal framework together with strong intelligence sharing and border control mechanism, especially through a regional lens needs to be established. It is in view of this that a draft Bill criminalizing human trafficking was submitted to Parliament by the Government.

The Maldives believes that to address the issue of trafficking requires addressing issues of poverty, vulnerabilities and other socio-economic issues. A strong political will, as well as coordination with the private sector, especially at the labour market level is imperative to address the root of the problem. We count on the cooperation of our bilateral and multilateral partners to work with us in strengthening our efforts to bring an end to an issue that shame us all.

Thank you Mr President