



**Statement by the Maldives to the Preliminary Note by the
Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing**

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Maldives, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to Ms. Raquel Rolnik, for undertaking her visit to the Maldives last month. The Government warmly welcomes Ms. Rolnik's preliminary note which comes at a crucial time for the Maldives.

Reform of the housing sector remains one of the urgent priorities of the new democratic Government of Maldives. It also remains the single biggest challenge. Over one-third of the population or nearly 110,000 people live in the capital of nearly 2 square kilometres, creating severe congestion and compounding housing problems. Lack of income-generation in the atolls and disparity in the quality of services between the centre and the outlying atolls contribute to this over-crowding, while the very high costs of building materials, all of which have to be imported, add to the difficulties of quick fixes to the housing shortage.

Mr. President,

Four years after the tsunami the post-tsunami reconstruction programme is yet to be completed. Nonetheless, one major success story is the consolidation of population to the island of Dhuvaafaru, which is a newly built island by the Government and its international partners. The island, which houses two schools, one health center, a community centre and three mosques is now the new home of the people of Kandholhudhoo, who had to abandon their island in the wake of the tsunami. The Maldives takes this opportunity to express its appreciation to all its international partners as the country continues on the path to development.

As the Special Rapporteur's Note very aptly points out, climate change poses a grave threat to the provision of adequate housing to the people of Maldives. Coastal erosion, tidal swells and flooding is a reality for Maldivians. For the people of the island of Thulhaadhoo for instance, heavy coastal erosion on a daily basis has rung off alarm bells that have once again, brought this grim reality of the situation to the fore-front. And so with Komandoo in Shaviyna atoll, and so on and on, in nearly 88 of the 200 inhabited islands.

It is in this regard, the Maldives echoes the recommendations contained in the Rapporteur's Note, in particular the international responsibility, to urgently support adaptation strategies for the impact of climate change. The Maldives also calls on its international partners to contribute to the unique environment of Maldives through funding of studies, capacity building and innovative approaches.

The Government assures the Council that the Maldives will continue to utilise available resources towards enhancing the housing sector and state that the Government is ready to engage with the international community and play its part. Affordable housing is one of the five key election pledges of the new government, and a mix of public funds, public –private partnerships and ODA is being mobilised to address the pressing issue of housing.

The Government is confident that the international community will continue to work with the Maldives in addressing our key developmental challenges. We hope that our development partners who will sit down with us from 23 – 24 March this year in Male' for the Maldives Development Partnership Forum, will find the report of the Special Rapporteur a useful contribution to the discussions of the development plans and priorities of the Maldives.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our commitment to continue the dialogue with the Special Rapporteur.

Thank you Mr. President.
