



Check Against Delivery

Statement by

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Republic of Maldives**

at the

Fourth Session

of the

**Human Rights Council of the
United Nations**

14th March 2007



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Mr. President,

It's a great pleasure and a privilege to address the 4th Session of the Human Rights Council, and I thank you for this opportunity.

I would like to start by congratulating you on the manner in which you continue to steer the work of the Human Rights Council in this, its first crucial year. Although a significant amount remains to be done if the year is to reach a successful conclusion, the Government of the Maldives has no doubt that under your skilled and astute leadership we will be able to meet the great expectations placed upon the Council by the United Nations General Assembly and by people all over the world.

Mr. President,

As you are aware the Maldives is embarked on a sweeping programme of constitutional, democratic and human rights reform. When completed, it will engineer a political transformation to match the economic and social developments achieved by the country over the past thirty years.

Our objective with the political reform programme is clear: to create a model democracy in the Maldives founded upon the promotion and protection of human rights.

The Maldives Government sees the Universal Periodic Review mechanism as an extremely important tool to help us realise this ambition. This is the case for two main reasons.

Firstly, a key tenet of the reform agenda is that it should take place in full *cooperation with* rather than in *isolation from* the international community. For that reason, the opportunity to have our efforts reviewed on a regular basis by our peers is extremely important and welcome. Linked to this, the Maldives also sees the UPR process as an important opportunity to identify areas where the international community can assist us through, for example, capacity-building and technical assistance.

Secondly, the Maldives is fully aware that producing a new constitution and adopting new legislative bills strengthening human rights protection are only the first steps. Equally important will be to ensure that these new provisions are fully and effectively implemented. Thus a regular opportunity to publicly



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discuss and assess progress with Council Members and other interested stakeholders will, we believe, help maintain momentum and focus.

Mr. President,

Because of the importance we attach to the UPR process, my Government is heartened by progress in the working group charged with establishing the modalities for the mechanism. The cooperative spirit in which the working group discussions have taken place, helped in no small part by the outstanding chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Loulichki certainly bodes well both for the ultimate effectiveness of the UPR mechanism and for the effectiveness and success of the Council more broadly.

Notwithstanding this generally positive picture, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly stress to the Council that the final UPR process must, if it is to be a truly universal and effective mechanism, take special account of the needs of Least Developed Countries. Specifically, and as the Maldives and many others have advocated from the very start of the UPR discussions, we believe that it is imperative that a special fund be established to pay for in-country orientation and technical assistance programmes on the UPR process. The fund should also help capital-based experts from LDCs to travel to and stay in Geneva for the UPR dialogue. Without such orientation and familiarisation programmes and support facilities, there is the very real risk that many LDCs, especially those that do not have a Mission in Geneva or those with very small Missions, will get left behind and will fail to derive any benefit from the UPR.

Mr. President,

I would also like to take this opportunity to quickly update the Council on recent progress with the Maldives' constitutional, democratic and human rights reform programme.

Firstly, I am proud to announce that the on 19 December last year the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its optional protocol, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights officially entered into force in the Maldives. As of that moment, human rights in the Maldives became guaranteed not only by the Constitution but also by the weight of international law. Although we recognise our shortcomings and realise that we have much work to do to bring ourselves fully into line with the 2 Covenants, the Maldives took the conscious decision that it is best to sign the Covenants and then work with the Human Rights Council, the OHCHR and the