

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



# MALDIVES

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**Statement by His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives  
at the General Debate of the Sixty Second Session of the  
United Nations General Assembly**

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me at the outset to extend to you, Mr. President, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your election to preside over the Sixty Second Session of the General Assembly. Your election to this high office is a tribute to your wisdom and skill as well as a true reflection of the important role played by your country in the international arena. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in your work.

At the same time, allow me, Mr. President, to place on record my delegation's profound gratitude and appreciation to your predecessor, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, for the commendable manner in which she guided the work of the 61<sup>st</sup> Session.

Let me also take this opportunity to express my delegation's deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, for his dedication and leadership. The Maldives pledges its full support to the Secretary-General's untiring work in promoting the noble principles of this Organisation.

Mr. President,

The spectre of terrorism visited the Maldives this past weekend. On Saturday afternoon an improvised explosive device was detonated in the commercial area of our capital Male' injuring twelve innocent bystanders. This unprovoked attack was the first of its kind in our history.

I would like to extend our sincere sympathies to those who were injured and to their families.

The Maldives is a country renowned for its tranquillity and warm welcomes. Our people are united in shock and outrage that this happened on our soil. That shock is matched by a determination that such cowardly acts of aggression will not be allowed to undermine or jeopardize the maintenance of our peaceful and harmonious society.

On behalf of the people of the Maldives, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our many friends in the international community for their expressions of support and solidarity. I would particularly like to thank those countries that have provided us with their expertise, technical advice, and assistance in the ongoing investigation. Finally, I would like to commend the work of our domestic law enforcement and other agencies that have reacted to this incident with such speed and professionalism.

This incident serves as a reminder that no State is immune from the scourge of terrorism. The Maldives utterly condemns all acts of terrorism wherever they are perpetrated.

Mr. President,

The Maldives, as a low-lying Small Island State, is particularly vulnerable to the perils of global climate change, a point brought sharply into focus by the recent sea swells which submerged a large part of the country. For the past twenty years the Maldives, along with its partners in the Alliance of Small Island States, has thus been at the forefront of efforts to bring the issue of climate change and its devastating impact on Small Island Developing States to the world's attention.

Addressing this Assembly in 1987 at the high-level debate on environment and development, President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, said and I quote:

*"The profound dilemma of environmental transition is a global one, and its implications are worldwide and long-term. Though the Maldives and other low-lying archipelagic nations may have to suffer the most immediate and the most extreme effects of a global sea-level rise, there is a potential danger to a significant portion of the world's population in the near future... No one nation, or even a group of nations, can alone combat the onset of a global change in environment."*

Unquote.

Since that ground-breaking debate, the international community has convened numerous conferences and summits at which it has agreed on a wide-range of plans and programmes of action aimed at addressing global climate change. However, as a community of nations we must regretfully concede that, all too often, the reality of implementation has failed to match the ambitions of rhetoric. Twenty years on, greenhouse gas emission levels are continuing to increase unabated and the consequences of global warming are becoming ever more apparent. One can only therefore conclude, Mr. President, that the past twenty years has been an era of missed opportunities.

Despite these stark facts Mr. President, last week's high-level debate on climate change has once again given us some hope and encouragement. As a result of a palpable change in world opinion, there is now a real sense of international momentum leading towards December's crucial Conference in Bali. We believe that this Conference offers a chance to overcome the failed promises and missed opportunities of the past, and to build a new global consensus on climate change.

We must take collective responsibility and agree to an integrated and comprehensive approach to climate change that recognizes and covers all four

pillars of climate change policy – mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer and funding.

While the necessary steps are clear, the crucial question, as always, is whether we - the international community - have the political will to undertake these steps, to build on the commitments entered into in Rio, Kyoto, Johannesburg, New York and elsewhere, and to secure a successful outcome from the Bali process.

Mr. President,

I can assure you that the Maldives will play its part in this process. I am happy to announce here today my government's initiative to host a preparatory SIDS meeting in the Maldives in November. The purpose of the meeting to draw up a collective stand on the individual human dimension of climate change, for submission to the Bali Conference.

Mr. President,

The Asian Tsunami of 2004 represented the worst natural disaster in the Maldives' history. The economic damage and losses alone were equivalent to almost two-thirds of the country's Gross Domestic Product.

Although much remains to be done to complete the process of recovery, a considerable amount has already been achieved. We need the continued support of our development partners and the international community to overcome the challenge of Tsunami recovery.

The devastating tsunami threatened to derail the Maldives in our attempts to attain the Millennium Development Goals and our planned graduation from the list of Least Developed Countries.

Despite the tsunami, the Maldives continues to make strong progress towards the attainment of the MDGs. The Maldives has already achieved Goal 1 – the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, and Goal 2 – the achievement of universal primary education. We are also on course to meet Goals 4, 5 and 6 on reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and combating communicable diseases respectively. Consolidating and strengthening progress towards all of the MDGs is a key focus of the recently launched 7<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan.

Buoyed by these successes, the Maldives will next year begin our transition period for graduation from Least Developed Country status. For the Maldives, graduation represents a double-edged sword. On the one-hand, it is recognition of the startling economic and social development that the country has enjoyed over the past thirty years. On the other hand, graduation will bring with it a range of new challenges associated with, for example, less favourable trading conditions and reduced levels of development assistance. Adapting to this new

reality will not be easy. In that regard, I would like to use my speech today to urge our international partners to assist us in making the transition process as smooth as possible.

Mr. President,

Next year marks the 60th Anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Maldives Government is determined to mark the occasion by completing the country's current Reform Agenda, an ambitious programme of reforms designed to strengthen individual rights and freedoms, ahead of multi-party elections under a new Constitution.

Since the start of the Reform Agenda in 2004, the Maldives has made remarkable strides in the field of human rights. An independent Paris Principle-compliant Human Rights Commission has been established. The Maldives has acceded to the two major human rights covenants – on civil and political rights, and on economic, social and cultural rights. Later today I will sign, on behalf of the Government, the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities meaning that the Maldives will have signed or ratified 8 of the 9 core human rights treaties. Last year, the Maldives also became the first country in Asia to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

However, the Government readily concedes that much more needs to be done. In its work the Government is proceeding in close cooperation with international human rights bodies. For example, last year the Maldives became one of the few countries to extend a Standing Invitation to all UN human rights Special Rapporteurs to visit the country; while earlier this year the Government invited the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to appoint a National Human Rights Advisor to the Maldives.

Mr. President,

The Maldives reiterates its support for the right of the Palestinian people to an independent homeland. We therefore call on the international community, led by the Quartet, to revive the peace process as a matter of urgency.

The Maldives also calls on the international community to continue and intensify its efforts to bring peace and stability to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Maldives also reiterates its steadfast opposition to the development, proliferation or use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. President,

Strengthening and revitalizing the United Nations to take on the new and emerging challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century remains an important task. We are encouraged by the progress that has been made in implementing the wide-ranging UN reform programme over the last two years. However, we sincerely

believe that the reforms cannot fully succeed without the much-needed and concurrent reform of the Security Council. Maldives firmly believes that an effective multilateral framework is fundamental for the security of small states and that such a framework should take into consideration the modern geopolitical realities.

In this regard, the Maldives reiterates its support for the G-4 draft resolution on Security Council reform. We hope, therefore, that we will be able to make progress on Security Council reform during this Session.

Mr. President,

Before I conclude, please allow me to reaffirm the Maldives' commitment to the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and to offer our full support to the United Nations' continuing work for the betterment of humanity and for the maintenance of international peace and security.

I, Thank you, Mr. President.