



MALDIVES

Sixth Committee of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Item 85 – Rule of Law

Statement by:

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Thank you Mr Chairman,

The Republic of Maldives was one of the first countries in South Asia to adopt a Constitution, having done so in 1932. In our strides towards development, we have had six Constitutions and seven more amendments; all leading up to our 2008 Constitution and the fruition of eight decades of democratic engagement.

The Maldivian democracy is home-grown. That creates a nexus between our long held traditions and universal values of democratic governance. We now have complete separation of powers, independent institutions and methods of horizontal accountability. The path we walk is one that is fraught with hardship and one that necessitates constant vigilance and effort. Our guiding light through this journey is the rule of law.

Mr Chairman,

The Maldives is staunchly and unyieldingly committed to the rule of law. We are committed to instilling a system based on rules and their non-arbitrary application. However, this takes time to cultivate. Though our institutions are young, as in older democracies, they are settling into patterns and traditions that are conducive to a stable and prosperous democratic state. It is the Government's position that further democratic consolidation must proceed organically, without violent disruption or intervention, and through existing avenues of redress. The people of the Maldives are ready for stability.

In recent Presidential, Parliamentary and local elections, the will of the people was made clear. In spite of heated political debate and campaigning, and with extensive foreign scrutiny and involvement, the Maldives was able to hold peaceful elections with voter turnout rates that exceeded 90%, reflecting the capability of our democratic institutions and the will of our people.

The 2013 elections marked a milestone in Maldives' journey, being the second multi-party presidential elections in the country's history. However, elections, a multi-party political system, the separation of powers and independent institutions are only markers along a nation's democratic trajectory.

Mr Chairman,

The Maldives experience shows that democracy cannot be traced in the pages of law, but rather need to be instilled in people's hearts and minds. The only way for a new home-grown democracy to achieve resilience is to transform the way people think and to change the normative framework of society.

Through fostering the value of democratic responsibility, going hand in hand with fundamental human rights, the populous can engage within the confines of the rule of law. This promotes socio-economic development through the provision of a stable environment and a climate of trust among public and private actors.

Mr Chairman,

The Rule of law feeds inherently into peace and security, but it also has implications for sustainable development and human rights.

During the past six years of democratic transition, the Maldives has enacted laws and policies that ensure basic social protection for those who are most in need – the family, the elderly, the disabled, migrant workers, women and children. Further, the Constitution guarantees non-discrimination based upon gender, race, disability and income groups.

The Domestic Violence Act of 2012, with the support of the Family Protection Authority, establishes safe houses for victims of sexual and domestic violence, and takes measures to assist them in finding legal and other remedies. The Disabilities Act of 2011 ensures special assistance and protection, creating a Disability Council, Registry and Allowance for persons with disabilities. The Pension Act of 2009 creates a pension scheme for those over the age of 65 and coupled with a universal healthcare system ensuring the elderly their right to live with dignity. The Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2013 creates safeguards for the victims of trafficking and provisions for their repatriation. Finally, the legislation on child abuse, enacted in 2010, protects the most innocent members of our community.

The legislation created towards protecting the vulnerable in our country, complies with its multilateral commitments. The Maldives is a State party to seven of the nine key international human rights instruments, as well as ILO's Eight Core Conventions on Fundamental Human Rights, the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocols, and the International Convention for the Protection of all persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Without the mechanisms to protect the most vulnerable in our society provided for with the legislative framework of the country, development that is sustainable and far-reaching cannot be guaranteed.

Mr Chairman,

Democratization is realised through a partnership between the State and the governed. While the governed have democratic responsibilities, the State has the obligation to ensure transparency. Internal oversight, together with external accountability forms a fundamental pillar of the rule of law. The Government of the Maldives has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to this ideal, exemplified through initiatives such as the internal review and oversight of the Maldives Police Service, supplemented by the work of the independent Police Integrity Commission.

Mr Chairman,

The Maldives believes wholeheartedly in the power of economic empowerment as a contributor to stability and the rule of law. Towards this objective, the Government has embarked on a massive economic diversification programme aimed at raising people's welfare, creating employment and empowering youth, women and the destitute.

Through its democratic consolidation process, the Maldives is continuously striving to uphold the rule of law not only as a marker of development, but also as a facilitator of economic and social progress. Today, we join other Member States in emphasising the importance of the rule of law and good governance. It is time that we, as a global community, match words with actions. It is imperative that the rule of law remains meaningfully integrated in the post-2015 development agenda.

Thank you.