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MALDIVES

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[Check Against Delivery]

Statement by Ms. Lauza Ali, Counsellor
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations
at Six Committee Agenda Item 84:
The Rule of Law at the National and International Levels
7 October 2022, New York

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

1. I thank the Secretary General for his report on strengthening and coordinating the rule of law activities of the United Nations.

Mr. Chair,

2. The rule of law is the foundation of a fair and just society and a core component of peace and security. It is also critical to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16: promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. We seek to provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, notwithstanding COVID-19 challenges. Therefore, the Maldives welcomes the efforts of the UN Global Programme on Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Rights.

3. Delivering transitional justice is key to instilling peace in our society and ensuring accountability against state practices that have violated human rights. As highlighted in the SG's report, the United Nations has supported the mandate of the Ombudsperson's Office for Transitional Justice.



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4. We have also intensified our efforts to end systemic corruption at all levels. The Maldives has in place, a Zero-Tolerance Policy to Corruption and in this respect, a Whistle-blower Protection Act has recently been enacted to promote good governance that prevents acts of corruption from occurring; reported instances of corruption can be anonymously lodged through a whistleblower portal. Significant amendments were brought to the Anti-Corruption Commission Act in 2020 to increase the transparency and accountability of members appointed to the Commission.

Mr. Chair,

5. The Maldives keeps working to achieve judicial independence. In 2019, the Judicial Service Commission adopted a policy to advocate transparency and give equal opportunity for new candidates to compete for courts. Amendments to the Judges Act have been proposed to enhance rules of conduct and set mandatory asset declaration rules for Judges This Amendment has been submitted to the Parliament, and is currently in the Committee Stage. Further, the Amendment to the Judicial Service Commission's Act revamps procedures regarding disciplinary hearings against sitting Judges, and established an appeal process for disciplinary decisions against sitting Judges.

6. Continuing legal education and professional development for Judges is a key priority and as such, numerous efforts are underway to re-organize the Judicial Academy, update curricula and formulate training needs assessments, to ensure that that the Judiciary is well-qualified and upto date.



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Mr. Chair,

7. Implementing legal sector reform in parallel with Judicial Reform is crucial. As such, the 2019 Legal Professions Act established the first ever Bar Council in the Maldives and work is also underway to overhaul the Legal Aid system in the Maldives which would promote equality in access to justice. The implementation of the Government's Legislative Agenda is well on track, with over 100 bills already submitted to the Parliament since November 2018. A new and modern Evidence Act has been passed which overhauled the outdated evidence law that has been in place since 1976. Further, a comprehensive and consolidated Civil Procedure Code has been newly enacted in 2021 to improve the efficiency in the civil litigation process.

Mr. Chair,

8. The enforcement of the rule of law can be better achieved through cooperation. As detailed in SG's report, the United Nations has supported the strengthening of prison and probation services to manage violent extremist prisoners and to prevent radicalization in prisons in the Maldives.

Mr. Chair,

9. Free, fair and competitive elections are one of the pillars of a truly vibrant democratic society. Citizens and civil society must also participate actively in a democracy that guarantees fundamental freedoms and rights, and bars corruption. These priorities were fully integrated into our Strategic Action Plan 2019-2023. For instance, our Elections



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Commission has been given more independence and responsibility, in addition to establishing asset declaration rules for members of the Elections Commission.

Mr. Chair,

10. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought disproportionately heavy consequences for women and girls. Ensuring gender equality is a central pillar of our Strategic Action Plan, through the promotion of gender equality and by combatting discrimination and violence against women. A National Gender Equality Action Plan has also been formulated to establish a strong framework for measurable actions during the period of 2022-2026. The recent amendment to the Decentralisation Act allocates a third of local council seats to women. The first female Justices were appointed to the Supreme Court of Maldives in 2019 and a female Judge was appointed to the Criminal Court in 2020 for the first time ever in the Maldives. This shows that there are no legal barriers to women becoming Judges and currently women preside over cases at all tiers of the Maldivian court system.

Mr. Chair,

11. As a country committed to fulfilling its international obligations, the Maldives makes every effort to promote the rule of law and human rights both at home and abroad. We have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and have submitted the Declaration under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,



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increasing access to justice for our citizens and demonstrating our ongoing commitment to the international community to be held accountable for violations.

12. We are also in the final stages of ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and have officially withdrawn some reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

13. At home, we have taken steps to further align our domestic laws with our international human rights obligations by amending the Anti-Human Trafficking Act and enacting the Child Rights Protection Act and the Juvenile Justice Act, all of which enhances the legal framework pertaining to child rights.

Mr. Chair,

14. We are committed to a Maldives that is free of corruption and human rights abuses. We are also committed to give attention to the needs of the local populations and gender equality, as well as the promotion of the rule of law both nationally and internationally.

15. The Maldives looks forward to collaborating with our international partners on this issue, since multilateralism and cooperation have never been so vital in order to advance the rule of law for all.

I thank you.