



Permanent Mission of the Maldives to the United Nations

Statement by His Excellency Abdul Ghafoor Mohamed

Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Maldives to the United Nations:

**The Advancement of Women (Agenda Item 28 a, b) at the
Third Committee of the Sixty-fifth Session of the General Assembly**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman,

The Maldives would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary General for his reports under this agenda item, and we are encouraged by the increased attention paid by the United Nations to gender equality.

This year marks the 15th review of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 10th anniversary of the advent of Security Council Resolution 1325. The Maldives joins the international community in promoting gender equality through the empowerment of women and in recognising the need for a gender perspective in issues of international peace and security. While we are inspired by the progress achieved in the pursuit of the principles espoused by both agendas, we are cognisant of the fact that the road to comprehensive equality between men and women is a long one.

The Maldives firmly believes that the empowerment of women must include a three-pronged approach that promotes gender equality on the economic, political, and social levels. We believe that progress in these three spheres of human existence is essential to eradicating poverty and underdevelopment in our country, and around the world.

In the Maldives, female participation in the labour force has nearly doubled over the last twenty years, and we believe that our ability to endure during the tumultuous economic shocks we've faced is a result of this evolution.¹ Moreover, we will continue to develop policies that support the realisation of Article 37 of our new Constitution, which entitles every Maldivian citizen to safe and fair work conditions, equal

¹ <http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/10-PL28-Maldives-ODS-English.pdf>

pay for equal work, and equal opportunity for promotion.² However, there is much work to be done to ensure that the glass ceiling inherent in fledging gender parity movements is shattered. In the Maldives, discrimination, diminished market access, increasing vulnerability to crime, and loss of family-oriented social benefits that hinder the full participation of women in the marketplace persist.

At the root of much of these problems, is exceedingly low parliamentary representation. This deficit continues to buttress the barriers women face in the Maldives, because without the inclusion of gender perspectives, policies will continue to lack the multifaceted approaches required to address complex social, political and economic needs. To this end, the Maldives is fully committed to encouraging women's active engagement in leadership and decision-making at every level, and were inspired by the creation of UN Women. We anticipate meaningful engagement with this new entity with an aim to comprehensively level the social and economic inequities that result from political marginalization. We look forward to its support, as well as the continued support of other stakeholders, in developing effective policies and programs that foster real change and success.

Mr. Chairman,

The Maldives condemns of all forms of violence against women. Last year, the Parliament signed on to a global call to end violence against women, and adopted a resolution on the Elimination of Violence against Women.³ Despite these efforts, studies show that “one in three Maldivian women aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives, including childhood sexual abuse.”⁴ However, the Maldives continues passed the Domestic Violence Bill yesterday, which for the first time allows for the monitoring of cases, and the government plans to supplement the aforementioned actions with other tangible forms of prevention, protection, and treatment for the victims of violence and survivors of human trafficking.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the major challenges the Maldives faces in its work is a dearth of in-depth data relating to the needs and status of women in our country. Inadequate information results in uninformed policies that only address the symptoms of marginalization, rather than rooting out the sources of it. Therefore, we invite partners to work with the Maldives to produce a baseline study that examines the social, economic, political, and legal status of women in our country from a qualitative, rather than quantitative viewpoint.

² Rapid Assessment of the Employment Situation in the Maldives, Human Rights Commission of the Maldives, pg. 54

³ <http://www.saynotoviolence.org/around-world/news/austrian-government-and-parliamentarians-austria-and-maldives-sign-say-no> and <http://minivannews.com/society/comment-discrimination-against-women-in-the-maldives-10909>

⁴ E/ICEF/2010/P/L.28: UNICEF Country Programme Document for the Republic of Maldives, pg 4.

We believe that in-depth study that focuses on women, will go a long way in fostering a three-pronged approach for empowering women.

Mr Chairman,

The Maldives recognises that economic, political, and social modernity mandates the full participation of women. We are firmly committed to our responsibility to ensure that women and girls are safe in our communities, and feel supported and encouraged to take their rightful places in our classrooms at decision-making tables in our boardrooms and in our government. It is only through the active participation of all of our citizens—women and men, boys and girls— that we can ensure proper management of economic resources and responsible decision making for the benefit of us all.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.