



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

PRESIDENT
REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

**Message by His Excellency President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom
to the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the
Barbados Programme of Action**

Mauritius, 10 - 14 January 2005

On the morning of 26 December, tidal waves of up to 4 metres struck all parts of the Maldives. Within minutes, decades of development, hopes of our people, and aspirations of our children were washed out into the sea. 82 people died. 26 are still missing, most of whom are children. Thirteen islands had to be evacuated. Over 15,000 people are left homeless, and many are facing food and water shortages. Whole communities on our dispersed islands suffered economic ruin as several fishing boats were damaged and 19 resorts had to be closed threatening the economic survival of our nation. The damaged resorts need major reconstruction to return to business-as-usual. Further, the ecological impact of this disaster is yet unfathomable. The massive force and pressure of the waves washed out the topsoil of the islands onto the reef. The long-term damage of this sudden erosion and silting of the reefs on the country's agriculture and fisheries is yet to be assessed.

We have now to embark on the formidable task of rebuilding — rebuilding our lives and our economy. Our present priorities are to rehabilitate the lives and livelihoods of tsunami victims, provide shelter to internally displaced persons, reconstruct and repair social and economic infrastructure, and generate economic recovery to pre-tsunami levels. However, the Maldives alone will not be able to recover from this unprecedented tsunami disaster — we need massive **regional** and international **assistance**, in funds, equipment, and expertise to embark on **this national** endeavour. The Maldives require an estimated US\$ 239 million for emergency relief **and a** further US\$ 1.3 billion over the next 3 to 5 years for reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts.



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The assistance from our friends has been overwhelming. Once again, I express our deep appreciation for the quick response of neighbouring and other friendly countries and the international community at this hour of dire need. In the Maldives, the Government, with the help of those countries and UN agencies and through community mobilisation, has ensured that no person in the country died for want of relief. My earnest hope is that the international community would continue to follow through their commitments in the long term.

Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that impending environmental catastrophe of sea level rise due to global warming is progressively becoming more definite. The destruction that would ensue will, indeed, be more alarming. I, therefore, urge all countries to ensure that their commitment to protect the global environment is translated into immediate and active involvement.

The International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action provides us an important platform to highlight the environmental and economic vulnerabilities of small islands states. The tsunami catastrophe has shown us that environmental calamities do not respect international borders and that they are more damaging to small island states. It is imperative, therefore, that we work together to find ways to avoid and minimise the impact of such calamities to our countries. The tsunami disaster has forged a global unity that has not existed for a long time. Let us build on this new spirit of international co-operation and assistance to find ways to deal with the challenges of the future.
