



MALDIVES

[Check Against Delivery]

Commission for Population and Development 48th Session

Statement by:

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Distinguished Chair,

It is my honour to offer my warmest congratulations and welcome for your appointment as Chair of the 48th Session of the Commission for Population and Development and to the members of your Bureau. Let me also express gratitude to the Secretary General for the reports he has presented with regards to this mandate.

The Republic of Maldives aligns itself with the statement made by the Republic of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Maldives was honoured to be among the 179 countries which endorsed Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994 in Cairo. We remain committed to the principles, goals and objectives set out in the ICPD.

Madam Chair,

The ICPD set a foundation that has guided the tone of development over the course of the past twenty years. It helped put people at the centre of development and has guided the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, as it does help us shape the Post-2015 Development Agenda with which we struggle today. It showed us that growth and development had to be considered in a holistic fame and that rights are inherently consistent with progress.

The Maldives has been steadfastly committed to progress through development. Women's empowerment and equality was a cornerstone of the ICPD programme of action, and the Maldives has taken consistent steps towards making significant gains identified in the programme, as is indicated through the full achievement of five out of the eight MDGs by the Maldives.

The Maldives reduced maternal mortality from 500 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to only 49 a little over a decade later. This is coupled with the fact that now almost 95% of deliveries are attended by a skilled health worker, and the ratio of girls is higher than the ratio boys in secondary education.

The Maldives also adopted its first-ever *Domestic Violence Act* in 2012, as well as other laws, decrees and regulations to protect vulnerable individuals from abuse. Yet, social justice begins through our day to day interactions. In order to foster cultures of respect and a valuation of human dignity, it is the Maldives strong conviction that progress is only possible through dialogue among boys, girls, men and women.

Madam Chair,

People in the Maldives today live on average 20 years longer than those born in the 1980s. As the population grows, not only do we feel the socio-economic effects of a growing population, but also the challenge of maintaining the quality of life for elderly persons. A universal pension scheme and healthcare insurance has alleviated the burden significantly.

Government programs identify, support and empower vulnerable groups; from children, to the disabled, to single parents. Yet the challenges of dealing with population growth is ever present.

Madam Chair,

The Government of the Maldives remains concerned about ensuring the economic productive capacity of our young people. As a nation which faces diseconomies of scale, a narrow economic base, and incredibly few resources, it is a constant challenge to ensure opportunities for our youth population.

Though we have developed, growth does not naturally lend itself to greater equality. We hope to yet make gains on inequality between men and women, between the young and old, and in sectors such as education and in healthcare.

In order to meet our challenges, the Government has encouraged investment and the promotion of micro, small and medium business enterprises a vehicle towards reducing inequality and aiding in the provision of social protection. It is only through stable societies that new investments that we can catalyse economic growth through the inclusion of all sectors of the population.

Madam Chair,

Though we continue to strive for new avenues of development, we do so under the ever present threat of global climate change. Experiencing its effects even now, the Maldives faces development setbacks due to beach erosion, ocean acidification, and the depletion of fish stocks directly impacting the lives and livelihoods of our populations.

The story of development in the world today is a story of inequality. Both within populations and between them. Though the Maldives contributes the merest fraction of carbon emissions we will pay the dearest price for it. Though portions of our population live in poverty, the measures used to judge our development give them no recognition. And though many islands are but one extreme weather event away from devastation, the global commitment to ensuring reliance is lukewarm.

The Maldives is committed to holistic measures and methods of development, where vulnerable populations are protected, and progress prioritized. We look forward to working with the Commission over the course of this week, to speak with a united voice on global development.

Thank you.