



MALDIVES

Statement by:

Her Excellency Dr. Aishath Shiham, Minister of Education of the Republic of Maldives

47th Session of the Commission on Population and Development

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Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election, and wish you and members of the Bureau the very best in guiding our deliberations to a successful conclusion.

The Republic of Maldives aligns itself with the statement made by the Plurinational State of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

In 1994, the Maldives was proud to be among the 179 countries that endorsed the ICPD Programme of Action in Cairo. Since then, we have been committed in its implementation.

My delegation congratulates the UNFPA for the successful completion of the difficult task of evaluating the implementation of the Program of Action during the past 20 years and making a set of very solid recommendations for the ICPD beyond 2014. The Maldives, in general, agrees with the findings and recommendations set forth in the report.

Mr. Chairman,

The Maldives has taken several steps forward and made significant gains in the areas identified in the ICPD Programme of Action. While it has achieved five out of the eight MDGs and is on track with the remaining three, our gains have been coupled with new emerging challenges.

Efforts to empower women and ensure their participation in national development has remained a main theme of the government's agenda. Towards this end, affirmative action in the economic and social empowerment of women has been initiated.

The Maldives has been highly successful in reducing maternal mortality rates from 500 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 49 in 2012. This also corresponds to the positive gains made in safe deliveries with the proportion of deliveries attended by skilled health personnel at 94.8 per cent in 2009.

Increased access to sexual and reproductive health must remain a key priority to maintain these gains.

While these achievements are positive, violence against women remains a cause for concern. Women's security cannot be guaranteed unless they are given statutory safeguards that are institutionalised in the legal system. These safeguards form key building blocks of any society.

To this effect the Maldives adopted its first-ever *Domestic Violence Act* in 2012. Under the Act, victims are provided protection and safeguards through law enforcement as well as rehabilitation. Furthermore, the Government has also set up safe-houses for victims of abuse and violence.

In a landmark initiative, the Maldives has recently passed a decree allowing the services and support to individuals who are pregnant through incest and rape. Indeed, this is a highly progressive step towards protecting vulnerable individuals in the country.

In the Maldives, it is our strong conviction that only through continuous engagement and dialogue among boys, men, girls and women that true social justice and equality can be achieved.

Youth, which constitutes a third of the population of the Maldives remains the key to the sustainable development of the country. Provision of services to the youth is a high priority of the government of Maldives. Affordable housing, skill building, creating meaningful employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, recreational facilities, and space for participation in the development of the country are features of the new initiative.

People born in Maldives today, live on average, 20 years longer than people who were born in the 1980s. As the number of elderly persons in the population increase in the coming years, the challenge will be to maintain healthy aging and improved geriatric care services to ensure quality life. In order to reduce this burden on families, the Government has introduced a universal pension scheme for the elderly. This is in addition to their coverage under the universal health insurance scheme that all Maldivians enjoy.

Programs that identify, support, and empower vulnerable groups have been formulated. Under an umbrella program of ‘No child is left behind’ policy, high-risk children are provided with necessary support and care in order to ensure that all children reach their full potential. The potential loss of both social and economic productivity of young people of Maldives remains the main challenge to the development of the country.

Mr. Chairman,

The global climate change poses a major threat to the Maldives. We are continuously experiencing development setbacks due to beach erosion, ocean acidification, and depletion of fish stocks directly affecting the livelihood of the masses. Climate change is a threat to our security; and it is a threat to our existence!

While our capacities to further enhance the lives and livelihoods of our people is limited as far as national resources are concerned, together with the international community, we can progress to achieve a better future.

Despite our constraints as a small island developing state, the government of Maldives remains fully committed and strives towards achieving social justice, equity and dignity for all, leading to a compassionate society. The Maldives forges closer partnership with the global community towards this end.

Today, we are surely in a far better position to change the world for the betterment of its people than we were two decades ago. And our hope is that together we remain resolute in our conviction for a better world.

The enthusiasm that we have been witnessing from the statements and presentations during this Session of the CPD makes us optimistic.

I wish to assure the support of my delegation to the success of our deliberations.

Thank you.