



بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

MALDIVES

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Statement by
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Fifty Second session of the Commission on Population and Development
1-5 April 2018

Mr Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to congratulate you Mr Chair, and the Bureau for your leadership of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Population and Development. I also wish to thank the Secretary General for his reports for this session.

As we mark 25 years since the inception of the International Conference on Population and Development, many of us celebrate the accelerated progress that we have achieved today. Maldives in particular, is proud as a nation, for our achievements in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD as well as the Asia and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development. We have been successful in reducing poverty, achieve universal health coverage, universal education, address the needs of vulnerable populations and advancement of gender equality. Having pursued a 'people first' policy, guided by the Programme of Action meant Maldives became the first 'MDG plus' country in South Asia achieving five of the eight MDGs ahead of 2015. Where we failed to achieve the MDGs, especially with regard to gender equality, the Maldives has since then, made tremendous progress, with the enactment of the Gender Equality Law and pieces of legislation related to the protection of women. A true success story for sustainable development.

Many of these goals are today, enshrined into law. Services such as healthcare, education, sanitation, water, housing, and a safe, clean environment, are all mandated by Constitution to all. The challenge however, is providing these services for all equally and equitably across the country, where people are thinly spread across over 187 inhabited islands.



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As a Small Island State, with limited resources and a small economic base, our economic vulnerabilities are high. Maldives also imports most of its essential items, making this vulnerability more volatile. We have a large number of undocumented expatriate workers while a significant number of Maldivian youth remains unemployed or outside the workforce. Our geographical make-up makes provision of services costly and it is impossible to gain economies of scale, making investments very costly. These very characteristics do not fit into a traditional equation of growth and wealth. This is why, it has been so important for Maldives, that sustainable practices and building resilience go hand in hand with development.

But realities of today have no clear borders. The 2030 Agenda demands a more integrated and comprehensive approach, with the need for sustainable production and consumption patterns, urgent need for the protection of the environment in the face of climate change and to conserve our resources. We must also realise that the demographic dividend that we are experiencing right now, like many developed countries, will lead us to an aged population. It is therefore imperative that we tackle inequality within and among States. Promoting inclusive and peaceful societies is a factor that we cannot ignore.

As the Maldives embarks on the next National Development Plan, we hope to bring population and development in the forefront of any development planning processes. This year marks 50 years of the presence of the UNFPA in the Maldives, and we look forward to positively engaging, in our planning.

For these reasons, it is timely and critically important that we analyse this year's theme 'Review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', to map a clear and targeted way forward. For us, there is clear and important contribution of the Programme of Action to the 2030 Agenda. The special importance of ICPD in ensuring that sustainable development is based on individual rights and choices is something we need to enforce, to leave no one behind. Yet, some of the dynamics have changed, other important issues have emerged. Without re-focussing and re-committing ourselves to those principles, the progress that we have achieved can be reversed in a matter of few years or by one disaster.



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For targeted policies and to monitor progress towards our goals, high quality and timely disaggregated data is needed. We need the help of the international community, to strengthen population and development data systems at country level, to strengthen partnerships for implementation, including with civil society, the private sector, and the UN. Most importantly, we need help to attract the finances we need. Domestic resource mobilisation is almost always, insufficient. Domestic private financing is also limited in smaller countries. Thus, international support measures are necessary for scaling up financial resources, provision of technical capacity development, sharing of best practices and technology transfer. This is essential for the realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr Chair,

The Government of Maldives under the leadership of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih is committed to invest in our people. Investments that enhance the lives of our people, create more opportunities and empower our women, youth and the most vulnerable. We are committed to a success story of sustainable development, that places our people at its core. But we cannot do it alone. Collective global responsibility is key to transforming our world.

Thank you.
