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**Statement by Ms. Lauza Ali, Counsellor
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations
Sixth Committee Agenda Item 77: Report of the International Law Commission on
the Work of Its Seventy-Third Session
(Chapter IX: Sea level rise in relation to International Law)
27 October 2022, New York**

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

1. The Maldives aligns itself with the statements delivered by Pakistan on behalf of the G77, and China, as well as Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of AOSIS. The Maldives would like to thank the International Law Commission for its report and propose additional perspectives.

2. Given our vulnerability to the effects of sea level rise, the Maldives has long supported international action on this issue. In 1989, the Maldives hosted the first Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise, bringing together fourteen Small Island States to sign the Malé Declaration on Global Warming and Sea Level Rise. This early Conference led to the establishment of the Alliance of Small Island States, AOSIS.

Mr. Chair,



-2-

3. As acknowledged in the report, sea level rise is an existential threat to low-lying and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). In the case of SIDS, this threat concerns our very survival. For the Maldives in particular, climate scientists have already forecasted the unthinkable: the Maldives will be uninhabitable by the end of the century; here we are speaking of losing our culture, traditions, homes, livelihoods, losing our country; that will essentially render us “stateless” a term that is not recognized under international law.

4. It is urgent that the international community take the perspective of countries like mine into account when creating and formulating policies. We need to approach this matter with seriousness and urgency. The gravity of what lay ahead of us cannot be underestimated.

Mr. Chair,

5. I will move now to the issue of protecting people affected by sea-level rise. With regards to an existing framework, the report references the “2016 draft articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters.” The report states that the existing framework should be re-developed to address the specific needs of persons affected by sea level rise.

The Maldives would like to highlight that climate change is not a natural disaster, but a human-made one. As such, the draft articles can offer useful guidance, but should be



-3-

complemented with an analysis that includes transboundary harm and international accountability following a “common but differentiated responsibilities” approach. The Maldives invites advancing the debate by taking this perspective into account.

6. This debate, in our view, should follow a human rights-based approach. Further, the unforgiving effects of climate change disproportionately affect the most vulnerable sections of the population: women, children, seniors, people with disabilities, people of color, and indigenous groups are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of sea level rise. In light of the international law instruments relating to vulnerable populations, the Maldives argues that there ought to be an intersectional approach to the debate, and this is essential.

To conclude, Mr. Chair,

7. Every night, families across my country go to sleep praying that the ocean will be forgiving. Against worrisome forecasts, the Maldives is striving to preserve its land, its culture, and its history. The preservation of our statehood and the protection of our population is a matter of survival, one with important legal implications for all SIDs and low-lying states, therefore, let us continue this debate with an emphasis on increased perspectives, solidarity, and empathy.

I thank you.