

Honourable Abdulla Shahid,

Minister of Foreign Affairs

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE



Honourable Abdulla Shahid is widely recognised as an exceptional politician and a seasoned diplomat, with a long and distinguished career serving in both the Government and Legislature of the Maldives.

Since his appointment as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for a second time, in 2018, Hon. Shahid has worked incessantly to re-position the Maldives as a responsible and respected member of the international community, by renewing previously-strained relationships and building new ones, both in the bilateral and the multilateral domains. He has re-invigorated Maldives' efforts in the multilateral arena and led the national efforts to re-join the Commonwealth after a four-year hiatus. The Maldives also won the bid to host the 2023 Indian Ocean Island Games after tireless lobbying efforts under the leadership of Hon. Shahid. The Games will be the first ever international multi-sport competition held in the Maldives.

As a strong advocate for gender equality, he is credited with achieving gender parity within the country's diplomatic Heads of Missions for the first time, as well as in the Maldives' foreign service.

Amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Hon. Shahid has been one of the leading voices in the international arena on highlighting the devastation caused by the global health crisis on the economies and societies of Small Island Developing States. He has continuously drawn attention to the inherent economic vulnerabilities of SIDS to external shocks and their limited ability to bounce back from disasters.

Hon. Shahid began his professional career in 1983, as a Foreign Service Officer and rose through the ranks rapidly. Within ten years, he was promoted to the post of Director, International Affairs in 1993, with the responsibility to lead the Multilateral Department of the Ministry. He attended all United Nations General Assembly sessions from 1987 to 1994, working tirelessly to bring the issue of small state security to the forefront of the UN. He was a negotiator in the 1992 Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro and also actively participated in the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna. As the Head of the International Organisations Department of the Ministry, Hon. Shahid also represented the Maldives at several meetings of the Commonwealth, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Non-Aligned Movement, among others. He also led the Maldives' Delegation at the 20th Meeting of the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Nations in Uganda and the 6th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Senegal.

Soon thereafter, he was appointed as the Executive Secretary (Chief of Staff) to the President at the President's Office in 1995. He held the post for over 10 years, serving with a high degree of distinction and diligence, and displayed strong administrative and organisational capabilities.

In 2005, Hon. Shahid was appointed as the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and later as the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the first time in 2007.

During his first stint as Foreign Minister, Hon. Shahid advocated for a rights-based approach to climate change by making a submission to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, under the resolution HRC 7/23 “Human Rights and Climate Change”. He drew attention to the direct and indirect effects of climate change on the enjoyment of a wide-range of human rights which re-invigorated the discourse on climate change and brought to light, the multidimensional impacts of climate change. He also successfully steered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through a period of sweeping political change in the Maldives, skilfully displaying a willingness to engage more widely with the international community and international human rights mechanisms.

Hon. Shahid’s illustrious parliamentary career spanned 25 years, during which time, he participated in and oversaw major legislative progress and reform. He was a Member of Parliament for five consecutive terms from 1994 to 2018. Following the adoption of the newly promulgated democratic Constitution in 2008, and the first multi-party parliamentary elections in 2009, Hon. Shahid historically became the first democratically elected Speaker of the People’s Majlis, in his fourth term as MP. As Speaker, he energetically steered the work of the People’s Majlis and managed to build consensus at a time when the Maldives was undergoing a tumultuous period of democratic transition in an exceedingly polarised political environment.

During his tenure as Speaker, Hon. Shahid served as the President of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians Conference, and in the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association from 2012 to 2015. He also actively engaged with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

As a leading voice of the Maldives Democratic Party, Hon. Shahid adamantly advocated for political and judicial reform, and was incarcerated for a short period for his relentless activism. As the Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Maldivian Democratic Party, as well as the Joint Opposition coalition, he played a pivotal role in mobilising international action against injustice, corruption and human rights violations in the Maldives.

Hon. Shahid holds a Master's Degree in International Relations from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University and he completed his Undergraduate Degree in Political Science and Government at the University of Canberra.

Hon. Shahid is an accomplished poet and takes a keen interest in astronomy. A sportsman from a young age, he enjoys badminton, cricket and football.

Born in Male' in May 1962, Hon. Shahid is married to Aishath Suiza. They have a daughter and two sons.
