

Thank you Mr President,

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative shares the concerns of the High Commissioner in relation to the Maldives. In particular, CHRI echoes Mr Zeid's reservations about former President Nasheed's trial, and supports the calls for his immediate release. The international community's repeated emphasis on due process through the rule of law reflects the importance of a just process in ensuring the validity of the trial's merits.

Mr President, CHRI believes that an independent judiciary, independent institutions, and certain fundamental liberties such as freedom of expression, assembly, and access to information are the very basic tenets of democracy. Actions that negatively interfere with the functioning of the judiciary, compromise the independence of institutions, or threaten basic liberties, are a threat to a working democracy.

Given the developments over the past year, such as the lack of positive action in the case of the disappearance of a journalist working for one of the leading Maldivian dailies, the actions against the Maldivian NHRI for engaging with the UPR, continued restrictions on right to counsel and the right to remain silent under certain circumstances, and the arbitrary removal of Supreme Court justices last year, CHRI is deeply concerned about the future of democracy in the Maldives.

Mr President, CHRI welcomes the government's indication of willingness to work with certain inter-governmental organizations, including the Commonwealth Secretariat. We look forward to necessary reforms being implemented promptly. Further, CHRI calls upon the Maldivian government to swiftly fulfill its reporting obligations to the various UN mechanisms.

To conclude, CHRI shares the High Commissioner's concern about protecting and nurturing civil society. In this regard, CHRI calls on the government to constructively engage in partnership with civil society at home and internationally over the UPR recommendations it has accepted and those it rejected, and to find solutions to the difficult and sensitive issues that are impeding democracy and the realization of human rights.