

Opening Statement:

Distinguished delegates, your excellencies, and colleagues from civil society organizations.

It is my pleasure to speak to you on behalf of the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives. My name is Aminath Shifaath Abdul Razzaq and I am one of the 3 Commissioners appointed to the Commission in September 2020.

Following HRCM's stakeholder submission to UPR in 2014, the Supreme Court of the Maldives initiated a suo-moto case against HRCM, with the allegation of providing false information on the conduct of Maldives judiciary. The Supreme Court declared the Commission's submission unlawful and ruled that the Commission must abide by an 11-point Guideline. Although, the 3rd submission from HRCM stated that "the guideline imposed to HRCM by the Supreme Court does not affect its functioning" the newly appointed Commissioners of HRCM retracts this statement. HRCM acknowledges the efforts undertaken by the State to negate the restrictions imposed by this guideline. Nevertheless, HRCM calls for its complete nullification.

It's noteworthy to emphasize that several issues and recommendations that were stressed in HRCM's submission have already been implemented. For instance, a substantial amount of systemic issues concerning child protection and juvenile justice system are legally resolved with the enactment of Child Protection Act and Juvenile Justice Act. However, to put an end to the continued violation of the rights of children, HRCM urges the state to fully implement these transformative legislations.

As prolonged pre-trial detention without judicial review is a serious concern highlighted in HRCM submission, we acknowledge the concerted efforts undertaken in the recent times by the State to address this.

It is with disconcert that we note that the previous administration failed to effectively investigate and prosecute the disappearance of Ahmed Rilwan Abdullah and the murder of Yameen Rasheed. We

welcome the establishment of the Presidential Commission on Investigation of Murders and Enforced Disappearances in 2018 by the current government and to investigate such cases. We also acknowledge that the HRCM in the past, has been negligent in the investigation in these cases and pledge to take a more proactive role within the ambits of the commission's mandate.

To emphasize on the importance of providing remedies to issues related to arbitrary arrest, torture and religious extremist ideologies that still remain as concerns, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our recommendations to the State.

It is imperative to take effective measures to avoid incidents of arbitrary arrest, administrative detention. State should allocate sufficient resources to improve the conditions of detention and fully implement the UN Nelson Mandela Rules. We urge the State to establish an independent forensic institution to overcome challenges faced by HRCM in conducting investigations.

We believe that it is vital for the state to effectively address the spreading of religious extremist ideologies and xenophobia. We call upon the State to strengthen the anti-terrorism law to guarantee human security, uphold human rights principles and to ensure de-radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programs are structured and mandatory.

In closing, the HRCM would like to reiterate that while steps have been taken to address certain issues highlighted in our submission, there still remains a lot more that needs to be done. The Commission looks forward to working with the State as well as all stakeholders in implementing the recommendations of the 3rd UPR cycle.

We would also like to thank the UN Human Rights Council for this opportunity.

Thank you.

Closing Remarks:

It is important to reflect that the UPR submissions for this cycle were sent before the Covid-19 Pandemic and therefore HRCM urges the State to conduct a nationwide post-COVID assessment to determine the impact on the pandemic on vulnerable groups including migrant workers.

In order to address the issues highlighted in the HRCM and other Civil Society Organization's submission, it is imperative that the State reform legislations in line with international standards, strengthen monitoring and redress mechanisms, mainstream human rights principles into policies and actions, ensure access to services for everyone without any systemic discrimination.

HRCM looks forward to the recommendations of the 3rd UPR cycle. We are committed to the UPR process and will work with State to lobby and monitor the implementation of accepted recommendations.

Thank you.