

PRESS RELEASE – 11 States recommend the Maldives improve the rights of migrants and 23 states comment on the need to improve on issues pertaining to women’s rights in the Maldives

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11 States have recommended that the Maldives take steps to improve the rights of migrants in the country. The recommendation was made at the 9th session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group of the UN Human Rights Council, where the Maldives was reviewed.

7 States including Algeria, Mexico, Palestine, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Philippines and Ecuador recommended in particular that the Maldives ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICPMW). In addition, Indonesia, Hungary the United Kingdom and Norway recommended various measures to improve the rights of migrant workers including amending the labour laws and creating greater public awareness about the issue.

23 states also commented on the need to improve on issues pertaining to women’s rights in the Maldives. The states that commented on this issue were: Algeria; Austria; Mexico; Malaysia; Azerbaijan; Canada; Libya; Bangladesh; Brazil; Slovakia; United Kingdom; Australia; Spain; Sweden; New Zealand; Chile; Palestine; Norway; the United States of America; Nigeria; Trinidad and Tobago; Timor-Leste; and Philippines. Recommendations from these States to the Maldives included: taking steps to combat violence against women, continuing and improving the gender mainstreaming effort, removing reservations to The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); combating traditional stereotypes of women through education; passing laws relating to CEDAW and sexual harassment; improving women’s participation in public life; encouraging the media to project a positive image of women; and improving women’s participation in the labour market.

The issue of child rights in the Maldives was also brought up during the review. 14 states including Malaysia; Netherlands; Germany; Slovakia; United Kingdom; Australia; Spain; Argentina; Chile; Norway; Japan; Ghana; Bosnia-Herzegovina; and Timor-Leste commented on the issue. Recommendations to the Maldives from these states included: combating the culture of violence among youth; amending existing legislation to better protect children’s rights; ensuring the rights of children born out of wedlock; withdrawing reservations to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); preventing underage marriages; preventing the practice of having concubines; and expediting the passage of a Juvenile Justice Act in accordance with the CRC.

Other recommendations made at the Working Group Session at which a total of 49 states made interventions included: strengthening the independence of the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives; the criminalisation of human trafficking; continuing efforts to strengthen the judiciary, specifically developing a professional code of conduct for judges and providing training in human rights; taking a human rights based approach to climate change adaptation; increasing efforts to end discrimination against people with disabilities; ensuring the new penal code is consistent with human rights principles; establishing a minimum wage; and improve the enforcement of labour laws.

Almost all the states which made interventions during the session congratulated the Maldives for the progress that it had made on human rights and towards democracy. Several states also applauded the open, participatory and self-critical manner in which it had engaged with the UPR process.

At the close of the session the head of the Maldives delegation, Foreign Minister Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, said the delegation would hold as pending all recommendations received and respond to all of them in full at the next session of the Human Rights Council. He also committed to use the intervening time to take a number of steps which he hoped would allow the Maldives to accept the vast majority of the recommendations. Dr. Shaheed said that he would convene a meeting of the UPR standing committee upon his return to Male', in order to divide the recommendations into those which can be immediately accepted and those which require further consideration and consultation inside and outside the government. He further said that these consultations should include a dedicated UPR debate in parliament in which the government will seek the views of parliamentarians regarding the issues raised at the session; a cabinet meeting regarding the UPR recommendations; and a public hearing on the issue. The Foreign Minister pledged to report back to the Human Rights Council in March 2011 based on those consultations and identify the recommendations which the government was confident of being able to implement in the next few years.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States once every four years. The UPR is a State-driven process, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, which provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations. As one of the main features of the Council, the UPR is designed to ensure equal treatment for every country when their human rights situations are assessed.

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