



MALDIVES

Statement by:

H.E Mr Ahmed Sareer, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations
First Preparatory Committee Meeting for the Third International Conference
on Small Island Developing States.
New York, 24 February 2014

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

My delegation is honored to deliver this statement during the First Preparatory Committee meeting for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. Since this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor, let me take this opportunity to extend my delegation's warmest congratulations to you, and the members of the bureau on your election to guide us in our deliberations. Let me assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support in this vital process to a successful yet ambitious conclusion.

We would also like to associate ourselves with the statement delivered by Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the statement delivered by Nauru on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

Co-Chairs,

Twenty-two years have passed since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro had recognized Small Island Developing States as a distinct group of developing countries facing specific social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities. Yet we, as an international community, are still faltering or even regressing, instead of living up to our commitments. BPOA, MSI, JPOI and the MDGs have played an important role in focusing the developmental efforts of SIDS. However, these processes have not been fully implemented and a transformational strategy is now required to bridge national sustainable development priorities and the global development agenda.

SIDS have made great strides in sustainable development but the negative impacts of climate change have threatened to erode the development gains we have achieved and have increasingly made progress harder all along the way. We are acutely vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including phenomena such as sea level rise, increased frequency of severe weather events and deterioration of coral reefs due to increasing sea surface temperature and ocean acidification. The coral reefs and seas are our lifeline. The Maldives economy to a large extent depends on coastal and marine ecosystems and the biodiversity they harbour. Fishing has been a way of life in the Maldives for generations and we need to take strong steps to safeguard and sustainably develop our natural resources while building resilience against climate change. The Government of Maldives is currently spending more than 27% of its national budget to build resilience to combat the effects of climate change.

Co-Chairs

For the Maldives, change in rainfall patterns is already causing huge impact on availability and quality of rainwater on which more than 90% of our island communities rely on as potable water. The rainwater is polluted due to trans-boundary pollution and ground water is contaminated due to inundation, saltwater intrusion and contaminants from sewerage.

Another priority area for the Maldives would be addressing health and NCDs. Epidemiological and demographic transitions to non-communicable diseases and an ageing population continue to test our health system. Chronic diseases lead to considerable loss in productivity and consume a large amount of resources available for diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation. Up-to 70% of all deaths in Maldives is due to NCDs. As such, NCDs are not only a challenge for the health system to prevent, detect and treat, but also a challenge for sustaining human capital and economic development.

Energy security is critical for the Maldives whose 350,000 plus population reside in over 190 islands that are flung across more than a 100,000 square kilometers of the Indian Ocean. Economic progress and social development are at risk as the country depends on an unpredictable global market for its energy resources. The government currently spends about 35% of its GDP on energy.

Co-Chairs

The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States presents a pivotal moment in regard to addressing the challenges that we as SIDS face and must result in an outcome that reinvigorates the commitments of the international community to a global partnership that enables SIDS to eradicate poverty, build resilience and improve the quality of life for our Peoples and Nations.

With 2014 being the International Year of Small Island Developing States, we hope that it will be a continuous reminder not only of our unique and particular vulnerabilities but of our diverse and vibrant cultures and people.

Thank you, Co-Chair.