



MALDIVES

Statement by:

H.E Mr Ahmed Sareer, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations
Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
New York, 10 January 2014

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

My delegation wishes to align ourselves with the statement made by Bolivia on behalf of G77 and China and by Nauru on behalf of AOSIS.

Maldives is grateful to you for convening the 7th session of the Open Work Group on Sustainable Development Goals at the turn of the New Year. 2014 marks the first International Year of Small Island Developing States with the UN Conference on SIDS taking place in Apia, Samoa. We are going through an important phase towards development of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. My delegation is looking forward to working collaboratively and in the spirit of shared aspirations with all of you to lead these vital processes to a successful yet ambitious conclusion.

Co-Chair,

We appreciate the inputs and discussions during the past few days on important issues concerning sustainable development. Today's topic, climate change may be the most threatening spawn of an unsustainable development path. As reaffirmed by scientists, including the recent 5th Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it is a fact that anthropogenic CO₂ emissions drive climate change, causing sea level rise. The Report provides new estimates for sea level rise up to the year 2100, which are consistently higher than previous estimates. It is clear that as an archipelago of 1190 islands with over 80 per cent of its land area lying just above a meter from mean sea level, the Maldives and other low lying island states may not survive to see another century if current trends continue.

Coral reefs are not only the physical foundations on which my country is built, they are also one of the major attractions for our tourism industry and act as nursery habitat for our fisheries thereby contributing significantly to our food security. Rising sea surface temperatures will bring further large-scale coral reef bleaching events, such as the devastating ones in 1998 and 2010.

Change in weather patterns and sea level rise also further endanger our severely strained freshwater supply. 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. We do not have water and sanitation facilities available to a third of our remote islands and spend millions on emergency relief for water during the dry season, which lasts more than 2 months.

Furthermore, the Maldives is experiencing more intense, more frequent, and also more prolonged extreme weather events. Severe flooding and storm events cause damages to the vital and limited infrastructure, and affect livelihoods including agricultural activities. They also hamper the transfer of goods to remote islands affecting the availability of food and other necessary items in the communities. The negative impacts of Climate Change do not only threaten to erode the development gains we have achieved; they have made progress harder all along the way and will increasingly do so.

As we look towards the elaboration of Sustainable Development Goals, we have to consider the lessons learned from the past. Sustainability, Climate Change and Development are inherently intertwined and cannot be viewed in isolation of each other. As the Secretary General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on Post-2015 Development Agenda expressed fittingly: "Above all, there is one trend – climate change – which will determine whether or not we can deliver on our ambitions."

Co-Chair,

Disaster risk reduction is a vital topic and in the Maldives our domestic efforts have culminated in a Strategic National Action Plan on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction for 2010-2020, which has been designed to promote collaboration among policy makers, experts and practitioners for the development of a comprehensive risk management approach, build resilience, and to raise public awareness.

At the international level, we saw the emergence of the themes "mitigation", then "adaptation", then "loss and damage" in this order. When we listen to field personnel on the ground, we hear that despite the recent focus on adaptation, "loss and damage" is unavoidable, due to the sheer scale of the extreme events. In this regard, we welcome the establishment of a mechanism on Loss and Damage in Warsaw last year. Disaster Risk Reduction in this context is vital in building a bridge between adaptation, and "loss and damage". However a debate on disaster risk reduction or on loss and damage cannot replace a debate on mitigation and adaptation. In the end, a changed planet, outside of the safe operating space for humanity will confront us with disasters we are not and cannot be prepared for.

The Maldives' contribution to climate change is negligible, yet we have consistently shown that we are committed to do our part and to follow a low carbon development path. We believe loss and damage, adaptation and mitigation are equally important and should proceed in synergy with each other. Access to reliable sources of funding for adaptation is vital for progress and sustainable development for the Maldives.

Co-Chair,

My delegation considers climate change as more than cross cutting; it is the enabling environment for progress in sustainable development. For the Maldives and other Small Island States, whichever way we approach the Millennium Development Goals or any new set of Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Change will remain a threat to our mere survival.

Therefore, we call for a more dependable, consistent and ambitious approach to addressing Climate Change within the United Nations, including adequate means of implementation. While we work towards achieving a new global agreement on climate change under the UNFCCC in Paris 2015, let us not miss this historic chance in formulating the Post-2015 Development Agenda to send a clear signal to the whole UN system. Climate Change must be strongly reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals as a cross cutting issue, taking into account the principles of the UNFCCC and making use of the synergies and interlinkages with topics like transport, energy, sustainable consumption and production, and the Oceans.

Co-Chair,

With 2014 being the International Year of Small Island Developing States, we hope that it will be a continuous reminder to us in the process of elaborating the SDGs, to take the most vulnerable countries into account and create a Post- 2015 Development Agenda that leaves no country behind.

Thank you.