

Republic of Maldives

**Written Submission for UN Human Rights Treaty Body Review Process**

**Introduction**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is, in essence, an agenda based on human rights. The pledge to ‘leave no one behind’ is founded on human rights considerations such as equality and non-discrimination. The Maldives believes that a strong and effective human rights treaty body system will go a long way in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the promotion and protection of human rights.

The Maldives welcomes the three biennial reports by the UN Secretary-General as a result of UN General Assembly Resolution 68/268 adopted in 2014 on the status of the treaty body system. In light of this, the Maldives wishes to submit the following proposals for the UN Human Rights Treaty Body Review Process:

**Proposals**

1. Further simplify reporting procedures and set a limit on the number of questions included by human rights treaty bodies.
* All treaty bodies offer simplified reporting procedures for periodic reports. However, only 3 out of 9 treaty bodies offer simplified reporting procedure for initial reports. Therefore, offering simplified reporting procedure for the initial reports and limiting the number of questions posed would reduce the burden on states to submit their initial reports and assist in the implementation of the concluding observations respectively. The Maldives and other Small Island Developing States (SIDS) still face an extensive burden on reporting, resulting in a backlog. Although it is important that fair, accurate and periodic reporting be conducted, the reporting burden should not hinder the capacity of SIDS to consider concluding observations and participate effectively in the review process. Hence, there is a need to further simplify the reporting procedure without compromising the quality of the report, while ensuring that all national stakeholders are engaged during the reporting period and contributing to the process.
* The Maldives believes that harmonized guidelines are an integral part of improving compliance amongst state parties. The Common Core Document (CCD) and treaty-specific reports form the backbone of the reporting process, and greatly enhances the ability of states to effectively submit reports in a timely manner.
1. Provide sustainable capacity building and assistance to states for the preparation of the reports and streamline national human rights mechanisms.
* The Maldives believes that the lack of capacity to implement treaty provisions and concluding observations are a major obstacle in preventing states from fulfilling their treaty obligations. This is especially true for SIDS and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) as have a relatively high staff turnover rate and lack the technical expertise to bring into fruition, the intricacies of translating the necessary recommendations and observations into domestic legislation and plans of action. The Maldives believes the mandate of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights can be expanded to include this proposal.
* As the Secretary-General identified in his report, technical capacity building for SIDS is of great importance. While many SIDS, like the Maldives, do not have a central authority to coordinate responses, national mechanisms can be established for the implementation, coordination, reporting and follow-up of recommendations. A national database of clustered recommendations that automatically share data between national implementation focal points will allow capacity to be retained within the mechanism while ensuring that a solid knowledge base and institutional memory will be utilized. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) can assist countries that request for this assistance to receive necessary training and establish the national mechanism. The lack of technical capacity continues to hinder the fulfilment of reporting obligations within the set time frame.
1. Increase accessibility through the greater use of remote participation and undertaking reviews at the regional level.
* The COVID-19 pandemic has propelled a new digital society that has forced the world to embrace the use of digital technology in ensuring continuity of work. The advancements established in the United Nations on the use of digital technology should be viewed as an opportunity to increase participation of states with the treaty bodies via videoconference facilities. The use of remote participation and reviews conducted at regional level would decrease the financial burden on states, increase ownership of the concluding observations to implement them at the national level as well as increase visibility and impact on the ground.
1. Harmonize working methods of treaty bodies to ensure that concluding observations are more focused, targeted and achievable.
* The Maldives encourages all treaty bodies to continue their efforts towards a more coordinated set of working methods of further strengthening the treaty body system. It is also important to facilitate cooperation between state parties, treaty bodies and other stakeholders. The format of the concluding observations and follow-up to the implementation of recommendations could be strengthened. This could be achieved through a more focused and targeted set of concluding observations which would allow for more effective implementation at the ground. The methodology for formulating recommendations can also be amended to allow states to recognize implementing measures within the legal frameworks, institutional frameworks and in public policies.
1. Mainstream human rights follow-up through the UN system
* The progress achieved in the implementation of a state’s international human rights obligations contributes towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, the involvement of UN Country Teams in the implementation of the recommendations by integrating human rights recommendations into the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) would assist states, especially SIDS, in receiving the necessary funds and expertise to implement recommendations received from treaty bodies.