

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Maldives
to the United Nations Office at Geneva

General Statement

100th session of the IOM Council

Thank you Chair.

The Government of Maldives is pleased to participate and contribute to this General Debate as a new member of the IOM.

There are over 100,000 migrant workers in the Maldives – equating to about 1 in 4 of our total population. Many of these workers are undocumented and many are the victims of trafficking.

The geographical set up of the country, out-dated foreign employment policy, the lack of implementation of the legislation and weak administrative processes enables foreign workers to overstay or to “disappear”, and are just few of the challenges to the Government in its fight to protect either migrants or host populations.

For these reasons, the Government is now trying to assess ways of better managing the migrant population. Similarly, given the demands of a huge tourism industry and a booming construction sector, the Government is compelled to better control its borders and facilitate a professional market for foreign labour in a modern manner.

Nationally, a comprehensive legal framework lays the foundation of any actions aimed at combating trafficking. In this regard, the Government is drawing up an Anti-Trafficking Bill, with the assistance of the Australian government. In addition, a few months ago, the Government announced its intention to subscribe to international rules governing counter trafficking measures. In this regard, the Maldives is in the process of completing domestic steps for accession to the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. We are also trying to draw up support measures for victims, such as the establishment of shelters.

These are significant achievements, however the reality is that due to the multi-dimensional nature and the scale at which trafficking operations take place, it is impossible to fight the battle alone.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Maldives is therefore delighted to have, over recent years, scaled up its links with the IOM, capped yesterday with our membership.

It is clear that we possess the political will to create a fairer and more just system of migration in the Maldives. However, for the moment, our will is not matched by our

resources or expertise. We therefore look forward to even closer engagement with the IOM over the coming months and years in order to put in place system-wide reform.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Maldives also hopes that its membership of the IOM will allow us to help the organization move forward to address one of the most pressing migration issues of our time – namely environmentally-induced or climate-induced migration.

Scientists and demographers tell us that climate change and environmental degradation will result in millions of people moving each year both within and across borders. Yet at present, national and international policies are not designed to manage such movements. Nor is there any international understanding of how to deal with the potential problem of statelessness caused by climate change. All of this creates significant protection gaps which we should look to discuss and to fill.

The Maldives will look to play an active role in those discussions as a member of the IOM.

Thank you.