

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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 steer the work of the Third Committee. We are confident of your leadership and diligence in guiding the work of this committee to a successful conclusion. Let me assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support in the deliberations ahead.

The Maldives also wishes to extend its appreciation to the Secretary General for his reports under this agenda item and welcomes the recommendations contained therein.

Mr. Chairman,

The world today faces a global financial crisis, high levels of unemployment in developing and developed countries, food insecurity and income inequalities amongst other demanding and difficult challenges facing the youth and other vulnerable groups. The way in which young people shape their aspirations and dreams will inevitably influence current socioeconomic conditions, as well as the livelihood and the wellbeing for future generations to come. It is inherently linked to countries economic stability, its development and prosperity. It is in our view important to actively support young people to realize their full potential to overcome these challenges which must be addressed comprehensively and with a sense of urgency. We believe that concerted action is essential to address and overcome those challenges, among which education is one of the most fundamental and necessary areas of priority. It is also of primary importance that we work towards facilitating universal access to education aimed at the vulnerable groups in developing countries. My delegation commends the Secretary General for his initiative "education first", which was announced this year at the opening of the General Assembly. We hope that this initiative will enable quality education for children, young people and adults alike, including access to technical, secondary and higher education opportunities.

Mr. Chairman,

The Maldives in the recent past has made substantial investments in the development and wellbeing of the youth in the country, which accounts for more than 51% of the population. The government of the Maldives is committed to formulating a number of policies on social awareness, vocational and skills training programs that are aimed at providing important incentives for youth to participate in economic and social activities to promote political inclusion and social development. The Maldives also supports the hosting of a World Conference on Youth in Colombo in 2014 with a focus on the participation and involvement of youth in achieving the internationally agreed development goals on areas of actions outlined in the outcome document of the United Nations High Level meeting on youth held in New York last year.

M. Chairman,

The constitution of the Maldives adopted in 2008 for the very first time guarantees full enjoyment of equal rights and fundamental freedoms to persons with disabilities. Following the enactment of the Disability Act in July 2010, the establishment of a Disability Council has been a defining moment in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. The Council has the mandate to promote and support all sectors in compliance with internationally established norms and standards and to establish a safe environment for persons with disabilities. As a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities the Maldives is committed to improving the living conditions of disabled persons and promoting the achievement of the MDGs for persons with disabilities by explicitly including disability considerations in all national plans, policies and tools. The Maldives also welcomes the decision of the General Assembly to hold a High-Level Meeting on disability and development next year. We welcome the Secretary General's recommendations on priority areas for inclusion in the outcome of the High-Level Meeting, as well as highlighting ongoing efforts to mainstream disability in the post 2015 development agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

The Maldives looks forward to the preparation and observance of the 20th International Year of the Family in 2014. We believe that families are the most important agents for social integration and inclusion and measures to promote family values, through family-centered policies would address a number of cross-cutting challenges such as on poverty reduction, access to education and adequate healthcare. In this regard the Maldives has established a new Ministry of Gender and Human Rights with a mandate to promote social policies and programs in the country. We believe that sound family policymaking, evaluation and improvement of existing integrated strategies, and the promotion of social protection nets and benefits would allow the government to concentrate on achieving its social development objectives

Mr. Chairman,

Social development also poses a number of unique challenges to Small Island Developing States. While the Maldives has been actively advocating for increased international cooperation and participation in social development programs and policies, geographic dispersal of populations and lack of domestic financial and human resources has hindered progress in these areas. Therefore, my delegation calls on the International Community to recognize and prioritize the vulnerabilities faced by SIDS and increase efforts to mobilize resources in order to support the vulnerable groups in these countries.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman,

The Maldives remains committed to formulating stable social policies and programs that would promote participation of vulnerable groups in employment and productive sectors. We firmly believe that active participation of youth in a developing country such as ours would promote equality and stimulate sustained economic growth. Already youth participation in civil society and voluntary programs in the country has instilled a sense of responsibility in their ranks to the community. Their participation in policy formulation and decision-making processes encourage acute awareness and understanding of societal norms and the challenges facing our part to social

development. Youth participation in community, national and international platforms does make a difference. Given the opportunity, the dynamic energy and enthusiasm, the passion in which they carry out their assignments is astounding. In the Maldives alone, youth participation in the labor force has been on an increasing trajectory. The mean age of representatives at the regular meetings of this General Assembly currently stands at 29 years. Therefore, all governments should realize the untapped potential of future generations, and invest in their education, health and wellbeing. My own government is committed to doing the same.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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