

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
October 28 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mr. Mohamed, Representative of the Maldives

On behalf of the Republic of Maldives, let me thank the Nigerian presidency for convening this important debate on women and peace and security on the eleventh anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on women and peace and security (S/2011/598*). I welcome the remarks this morning by Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of UN-Women; His Excellency Mr. Lazarous Kapambwe, President of the Economic and Social Council; and Ms. Orzala Ashraf Nemat of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, on this important issue.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we have seen the emergence of a host of other resolutions focused on ending sexual violence in conflict zones, calling for greater accountability and the participation of women. During periods of conflict, women and children are the first to be affected and are often targeted, especially with sexual violence. With that in mind, the Maldives emphasizes the need to monitor the situation and actions of international security forces in zones of conflict, such as Afghanistan, Darfur and Haiti. The Maldives is especially concerned by allegations of sexual violence by United Nations peacekeepers in Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire.

Maldives has expressed support for Libya's National Transitional Council. With its current transition from conflict to creating a stable Government, we urge the National Transitional Council to stay mindful of the specific needs of women and its obligations towards them. That includes everything from disarmament and reconciliation to women's participation and representation. The path towards democracy is never easy, and women are often the first to be forgotten.

Today, we know that the empowerment of women leads to more stable nations with greater social harmony, economic prosperity and political tolerance. In order to promote international security, the Maldives suggests that we move beyond the framework that limits that discussion to conflict zones. The empowerment of women and democratic development, which leads to moderation and peace, enjoy a symbiotic relationship whereby any sincere efforts towards one leads to the other.

In the Maldives, through the democratic movement we began the process of empowering our population and reaffirming the rights of women. As the movement took hold, the former Administration was compelled to make concrete efforts to address national concerns, and allowed for a national survey on the abuse of women to be conducted. The results showed that one in three women in Maldives, irrespective of class or geography, is abused over the course of their lifetime. In addition to that, women are becoming increasingly more isolated through the adoption of conservative Islamic interpretations and their participation in the social, economic and political life of the country is diminishing.

It was democracy that turned the tide of abuse in the Maldives. Government-led efforts to address issues related to women resulted in the establishment of call centres and protective

services. Civil society participation and its advocacy in such efforts have also been instrumental. In addition, the current Government has taken steps towards training policemen and policewomen to respond effectively to domestic violence and abuse, while encouraging a greater participation of women in political life.

The President of the Maldives went so far as to endorse all the female candidates for our recent local elections, regardless of party affiliation. We are also proud to note that three of the 12 Cabinet ministers are women. A Maldivian woman was also elected to the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture. For the first time, the Secretary-General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation is a woman, who happens to hail from the Maldives.

By involving women in social, economic and political life, we are able to create stable nations that foster moderation, countering Islamic conservatism. A universal truth about radicalism is the exclusion and isolation of women. If we are to change the dynamics of security in the world and to ensure greater global stability, the only way forward is through ensuring the participation and active engagement of women without restrictive social norms.

The Maldives sincerely hopes that members of the Security Council consider that new paradigm and its implications for global security.