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Embassy of the Republic of Maldives



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Agenda Item 2: Regional perspectives on accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Review of regional progress on SDGs

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, Assalaamualikum and a Good afternoon.

Once again, I take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the valuable reports and presentations.

Indeed, the COVID Pandemic has exposed systemic flaws. It has highlighted fundamental weaknesses in our systems. It has taken away lives, and continue to challenge and devastate livelihoods, leaving irreversible effects on the global economy and sustainable development. While some SDGs made good progress pre-covid, the current picture looks bleak. Many goals have become stagnant and some are even seeing a reversed trend.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As part of concrete actions, under regional priorities for the decade of action, we need to address the issue of the high NEET rate in the region. This high rate of Youth “Not in Education, Employment or Training” continue to impact the potential productivity of a large segment of population in the region.



Excellencies,

With our domestic and regional economies at a standstill, trade facilitation is a key area that needs attention. Stimulants to increase local, national and regional trade will enhance job creation, resulting in, poverty reduction and uplift the socio-economic status of our economies. In this respect, connectivity and better transport linkages are crucial for an island state such as ours. Industry sectors must look at Supply chain optimization to broaden our economic base. Similarly, local and National projects that have been parked in light of COVID needs to be kick-started to engage various productive sectors in the economy.

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As a vulnerable small island developing state, the topic of Climate change is always at the forefront. Dealing with its impacts is integral to successfully achieving the SDG's. Mitigation measures must be mainstreamed in **all** our development efforts to ensure **resilient economic development**. Initiatives in Climate Change and Energy, such as “Accelerating Private Investments in Renewable Energy (ASPIRE) are underway. Maldives has also successfully implemented a phased elimination plan for Single Use Plastics with an ambitious 2023 target. To solidify our works in sustainable and resilient development, Maldives is also working on a comprehensive “Climate Emergency” bill that shall address the Climate Change challenges in designing and implementing our development programs.

..... Distinguished Delegates.

COVID has indeed seen the rise of new vulnerable groups in our societies. It has also challenged the advances we made in ensuring Gender parity. Moving ahead, while giving due consideration to address the new vulnerable groups, we must ensure that we do not risk sliding back to a situation where women and girls are left behind. Gender parity must be mainstreamed. Our policies and programs for sustainable growth has to be inclusive, *leaving no one behind*.



.... Ladies and Gentlemen,

When it comes to reporting on the progress of SDG's, data availability has always been a challenge. I am, however, happy to note that Maldives is in the process of formulating the new National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). This will help, improve data availability for government policy and planning purposes and for users at all levels. A "Statistical Bill" has been submitted to the Parliament, which will strengthen the collection, provision and reporting of data. This will also help in identifying data gaps and areas that need government intervention and help to make better public investment decisions to improve living conditions of people and accelerate economic growth.

Along with these local developments, I must emphasize here, that we also need to explore existing data platforms and tools such as the SDG tracker (which was jointly developed by ESCAP and Economic Commission of Africa) to help in monitoring and review of the 2030 Agenda.

Distinguished Delegates,

Indeed, COVID-19 is making existing challenges impossible to ignore. Development gaps are more prominent now. So let us use this information as a catalyst for progress. We must re-think, and re-prioritize our policy environment to catch-up on the 2030 Agenda. Maldives is always ready to work with our regional and international partners to further the Agenda. I am pleased to note that we had the pleasure of co-hosting the South Asia Forum in December 2020. I thank the UNESCAP for the opportunity and look forward to further collaboration.

I thank you for this opportunity and kind attention.

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