

a



ދިވެހިރާއްޖޭގެ ރާއްޖެ

Embassy of the Republic of Maldives



Statement delivered by Ms. Huda Ali Shareef, Permanent Representative of Maldives to ESCAP

**Agenda item 3. Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Pacific Island Developing Countries
25 May 2022**

Good afternoon, everyone.

On behalf of the Maldives delegation, I wish to express my sincere appreciation for the comprehensive presentation and for the substantive report issued for consideration under this agenda item.

Two years on, the Covid-19 pandemic has laid bare the varying intensity of most governments to respond to the unprecedented challenges of the crisis. The hardest hit among them are undoubtedly the countries in special situations particularly the Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Small Island Developing Countries.

The Maldives is a Small Island Developing Country that was also an LDC not too long ago. If this pandemic has taught us one thing it is that, the development of countries like mine can be wiped out as easily from one extreme climate event, one big shock to the economy or a merely a pandemic as the one we continue to face.

Like many other SIDS, the pandemic has left us with a crippled economy for the greater part of these last two years and the worst economic contraction in 2020 due to a sharp decline in tourism-related revenues. The pandemic demonstrated the extreme vulnerability of SIDS to external shocks. Our country's survival meant for us to make the very difficult decision to reopen our borders 3 months after the first wave of the pandemic in July 2020. The return of tourists was slow, making the economic recovery a challenging process. However, at the end of last year we welcomed 1,321,937 and we are slowly on track to restoring back to pre-pandemic projections. But let's not forget that the challenges faced by countries in special situations is one that requires constant support of the UN system, partners and financial institutions.

Today, as we take stock of how far we have come to achieving the Agenda2030 it is imperative to understand that SIDS will continue to remain a special case for sustainable development especially now more than ever. For most of the SIDS, this pandemic has unfortunately reversed many hard-earned human development gains by further distorting the path we were all sailing towards for the future. Our Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for 2019 to 2023 was carefully designed with inputs and commitments from different sectors, to ensure it's aligned with the SDGs. However, the progress on implementing the SAP has been halted due to the pandemic.

Despite the cascading impact of the pandemic, for small island states such as the Maldives, climate change still remains one of the greatest challenges. As front liners, the SIDS take the biggest hit for the



powerful impacts of climate crisis at a scale that is incomparable to many others. Yet, adequate financing, technology transfer and capacity building is not at a satisfactory level to address the impacts of climate change in SIDS and the least developed countries. To craft a meaningful solution to address this existential threat requires greater multilateral cooperation and partnerships.

The significant climate financing gap needs to be addressed with special consideration. There should be more flexible financing options based on the unique characteristics of the country and on the particular situation, rather than rigid frameworks and commitments. We have been urging our international partners to set up a Global Trust Fund and lower the cost of borrowing for countries in special situations, to enable us to implement adaptation and mitigation measures. We seek more concessional climate financing and innovative financing options. We believe reducing the cost of green, blue and social impact bonds can go a long way to achieving sustainable development and a transition towards a green recovery path.

As we rebound from the pandemic, the journey towards a climate-resilient COVID-19 recovery for SIDS must ensure systems and rules that are accurate, effectively calibrated and appropriate to SIDS needs. We reiterate the call for renewed commitments by the international community and development partners to respond to countries in special situations.

I thank you.

