Country Statement by
H.E Dr. Mohamed Kinaanath, Minister of State for Homeland Security and Technology
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Distinguished Chair, Esteemed delegates,

Asalaamalaikum

As we convene today, I stand before you on behalf of the Maldives, a nation characterized by its unique geographical dispersion across 1,192 low-lying islands, where just a fraction of our land is habitable. This distribution poses a many challenges for equitable development and shared prosperity among our population of over half a million people. Nevertheless, guided by a vision of inclusive and sustainable development, our newly elected administration has outlined key priorities to steer our nation towards a brighter future.

Foremost, among our priorities is the vision of a Maldives that embraces innovation and sustainability. Our President has articulated a commitment to bring about an economic revolution through capitalizing on our distinctive geographical location in the Indian Ocean
and natural resources. Furthermore, pledged to prioritize innovative approaches to economic and infrastructural development, thereby propelling our nation forward in a modern new direction.

To this end, our administration has identified several key initiatives, including the development of a central maritime port, the expansion of Velana International Airport, and the integration of maritime development in the north, aligning with an established global shipping route. Moreover, we have initiated a 20-year long-term development plan to ensure continuity and foster regional development by developing urban centers across the country.

Crucially, we are committed to prioritizing climate resilience, with a goal to increase renewable energy production to 33 percent and establish more biosphere reserves and nature parks. Our ambitious "plant five million trees" project aims to build resilience across our islands, and we are exploring the feasibility of vertical farming for enhanced food security. However, closing the climate finance gap is imperative, and we call upon the international community for support in this endeavor.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we stand at this crucial juncture in global development, it is imperative that we reflect on the progress made towards the SDGs.
The Maldives, as one of the most uniquely dispersed and geographically fragmented countries, faces multifaceted challenges in achieving the SDGs. Only with about 1% percent land, equitable development and shared prosperity across all islands present a formidable task. However, driven by a vision of inclusive and sustainable development, we have prioritized the SDGs as a guiding framework for our national policies and initiatives.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the correlations of the SDGs and the urgency of addressing systemic challenges such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. Heavily dependent on tourism, the Maldives was one of the worst-hit countries by the pandemic. Income and livelihood loss disproportionately affected women and youth in informal sectors, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address vulnerabilities and build resilience.

While the pandemic has exacerbated existing fiscal and climate vulnerabilities, it has also catalyzed efforts to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. Investments in renewable energy and initiatives to achieve NetZero emissions by 2030 reflect our commitment to sustainable development and climate action. Similarly, measures to reduce poverty and enhance social protection programs demonstrate our determination to leave no one behind in our pursuit of the SDGs.

Furthermore, we recognize the critical role of physical and digital connectivity in accelerating progress towards the SDGs. The Integrated
National Public Ferry Network project aims to reduce inequalities by improving access to services and opportunities for residents in remote islands. Similarly, the rapid transformation towards digitization has facilitated online education, telemedicine, and e-payment systems, expanding access to essential services and driving socioeconomic progress.

In addressing health and education challenges, the Maldives has made significant strides in improving maternal, neonatal, and child health outcomes, as well as reducing mortality rates. However, non-communicable diseases remain a major health burden, underscoring the need for sustained investment in healthcare infrastructure and preventive measures.

Women's empowerment and gender equality are central to our efforts to achieve the SDGs. While progress has been made in increasing women's representation in decision-making roles, challenges persist in bridging the gender gap in leadership positions and formal employment. Empowering women and girls with access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities is essential for realizing the full potential of our society and advancing towards the SDGs.

Initiatives to improve data availability and quality are integral to our efforts to monitor progress towards the SDGs. By integrating SDG monitoring into our national strategies and plans, we ensure that our
actions are guided by evidence-based decision-making, thereby maximizing the impact of our interventions.

Esteemed delegates,

As we navigate the complex challenges of the 21st century, the SDGs provide a roadmap for building a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future. The Maldives remains committed to this shared vision, and we call upon the international community to join us in our collective endeavor to leave no one behind on our journey towards achieving the SDGs.

I urge the international community to recognize the unique challenges faced by countries like the Maldives, which are disproportionately affected by climate change and face constraints in accessing regional markets. Targeted assistance and partnerships with international development partners are essential to advancing the ambitious targets set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Thank you for your attention.