Statement by

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Minister of Gender, Family and Social Services

at the High Level Panel Discussion of the Fourth Review and Appraisal of Madrid International Plan on Action on Ageing

29 June 2022, Bangkok- Thailand (09:30- 12:00)

1st round: The Maldives is a small island state that is now ageing rapidly. What are the priority issues on ageing, and particularly from a gender perspective?

1. It is a pleasure to join the high level panel discussion, and to have the opportunity to share some of our experiences and lessons learned in the context of a small island nation which is now ageing rapidly.

2. The population of the Maldives is less than half a million. At present, 5% of our total population accounts to people 65 years and above. This figure is expected to increase to 12.7 % by the year 2045 as a result, of the continued increase life expectancy in the last 30 years (73 Male, 75 Female).

3. The present government headed by President H.E Ibrahim Mohamed Solih became effective in November 2018. A five year Strategic Action Plan (SAP) is the guiding policy framework and that provides the overall developmental direction for national planning of the Maldives. Under the Social Protection policies of this SAP, strategies to strengthen the national social protection mechanism through the provision of essential social services and income security measures especially for older persons are a priority.

4. The National Elderly Policy endorsed in 2018 is the first of its kind for Maldives. This policy is set within a rights-based framework and highlights the promotion, protection and fulfillment of the six rights:
   - Right to life with dignity (with freedom from discrimination)
   - Right to health
5. Based on these policy areas, “The Maldives National Plan of Action on Older Persons” was endorsed on 2019, to implement the state obligations under International Human Rights Instruments Maldives is party to, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2015 - 2030, Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) 2002, UN Principals for Older Persons 1991 and the Government’s manifesto and SAP (2019-2023)

6. The Maldives National Elderly Action Plan identifies four policy areas and consists of 34 priority actions to be undertaken in collaboration with 10 relevant stakeholders. The four policy areas are:
   - Care and Support
   - Independence and Participation
   - Healthcare and Wellbeing
   - Preparation for ageing.

Details of the work done to implement this action will be presented in our country report. The government of the Maldives prioritizes policies that would provide a life of dignity for our ageing population.

7. Old-age inequality resulting from lifelong disadvantages can be alleviated through social protection and redistribution through social security systems and the provision of community-based services to reduce inequality between older women and men.

8. There has been a trend in Maldives that men has been working in the formal sector and women seen as caregivers and work informal sector. This resulted women unable to save any for their future, or to apply for any governmental schemes, loans. Hence a purposeful intervention was brought in the Maldives Pension Act which has enabled equal opportunities for those who are working both in informal and formal sector, without any discrimination, and equal opportunities for both women and men.
9. We ensure services are not subjected to any gender discrimination or inequalities even if older persons are needed to be taken to state care service such as bedridden programs, or health care services.

10. Despite this the caregivers burden is often solely on women, which is a challenge. Government of the Maldives is in the process of implementing the “Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP)” which was recently launched. This action plan vision is to create a society that provides for and guarantees gender equality, equal opportunity and justice for all irrespective of age. To promote gender equality and ensure the protection for all men, women and children in society from all forms of discrimination.

11. As the Minister, who is leading the social service mandate of the government, I reiterate the government’s commitment to older person’s protection and promotion through policy level to budget implementation through a gender lenses.