Thank you. Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

The Government of Maldives is committed to promoting and protecting the rights of Older persons. The Ministry of Gender and Family and Social Services, is mandated to protect and promote the rights of all vulnerable groups in the Maldives, including children, women, persons with disabilities, and older persons.

The Strategic Action Plan (SAP) of the Maldives offers a holistic approach to factors such as the onset of population ageing, which would have an adverse effect on the needs of older persons, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and other groups that are disadvantaged due to socio-economic inequalities.

The National Resilience and Recovery Plan (NRRP following the Covid-19 pandemic) is a recovery plan to address the economic downturn, with a major focus on the wellbeing of older persons.

As per the population projections of the Maldives, the rapid social and economic development of the country in the past few decades has brought about a shift in the population dynamics. As per the projections 14% of the population will consist of older people.

This shift in our population towards that of an ageing population can be measured by the ageing index, which is the ratio of elderly persons aged 60 years and above to every 100 children aged 15 years and below. Population projections of the Maldives indicate that there will be an increase in the ageing index from 17 elderly persons to every 100 children (2014), to 90 elderly persons to every 100 children by 2054.

This shift in the population demands sustainable strategies which would be beneficial in catering for the needs of older persons. With this regard, our Ministry has enacted the first ever policy on older persons which is focused on 4 key areas:

1. Care and protection
2. Independence and participation
3. Health and wellbeing
4. Preparation for old age
To further sustain these efforts, the government has also drafted a bill on older persons. The aim of this bill is to ensure that the rights of the older persons are protected, socially and economically. The bill also addresses negligence and abuse subjected to older persons.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now highlight some of the key activities that are being implemented in the Maldives to address the challenges faced by older people.

To implement the National Action plan under the elderly policy, an advocacy campaign “Ranveyla” which translates to “Golden Age” and targets the well-being of older people is conducted across the country. This campaign focuses on the areas highlighted in the policy. Such as, healthy ageing, nutrition, exercise, mental health, including information sessions regarding pension schemes. Furthermore, care and support information is also disseminated during these sessions. Are conducted across the nation focusing on empowerment of both women and men. These programs are conducted in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders.

The older population is entitled to universal health coverage ‘Aasandha’ which was introduced as a state funded health insurance scheme for Maldivians, with the aim of promoting affordable and accessible health care for all Maldivian nationals.

We acknowledge the crucial roles of inter-agency collaboration, as such in partnership with Ministry of Health, we have initiated Under this programme which caters to older persons of age 65. Both health professionals and social workers visits these clients and ensure they are provided with basic care.

Provision of quality care for the older persons is a priority, we have jointly worked with Maldives Polytechnics to develop a Certificate 3 module on elderly care. This is a short term course targeted at mostly caregivers of bedridden older persons and those who are closely working with older persons.

The government also aims to establish a fully functional ‘Elderly village’ in the Maldives. This main objective of this program is to increase the overall quality of life for the older people. The Elderly village intends on providing residential home facilities, aged day care and nursing care home facilities respectively.
The facility aims to foster independence, while also providing a well-balanced nutritional diet meeting individual requirements and recreational activities to develop a healthy lifestyle.

This project is crucial for the government as currently the only facility that accommodates older people under state care is Home for People with Special Needs (HPSN) which is a home build to cater for the needs of people suffering from various forms of mental illnesses.

To ensure the services provided by the Ministry at central level is also provided through a decentralized process, our Ministry, in partnership with other agencies, is currently establishing Community Social Group (CSGs) in all islands. This project, intends to establish a multi-sectoral social protection mechanism and expand the network of social service. It was launched in 2021 with support from UNICEF. Under the title “Ijthimaee Badhahi Madhadhuverin” or IBAMA in short, relevant sector-related government authorities work together holistically, as a cohesive group, for the social protection of each community.

This initiative ensures that the most vulnerable and at-risk individuals and families are identified, assisted, and provided with necessary services to uplift their living standards. The groups will be composed of representatives from island councils, health and education sector, law enforcements agencies and NGOs active at island level. The CSGs will work on identifying vulnerable persons and families on each island and work on prevention of abuse and violence through awareness programmes. It is envisioned that through CSGs, we will be able to identify senior citizens who are most vulnerable and may not be officially registered but still require additional support from the Government.

We are pleased to share our experience and learn about the best practices from other countries. I am confident that this platform will pave the way to improve our existing knowledge and enhance both our national and international agendas on this important issue. The government of the Maldives would like to reiterate our commitment in accelerating the implementation of Madrid International Plan on Action on Ageing and Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Thank you
*geriatric care and gerontological training, implementing elderly activity centres & establishing elderly homes to improve long term care.

*Include Ageing in National Policies;- such as disaster management / schemes

*Strengthen existing pension schemes to overcome poverty

*Improve Inter-agency collaboration between health, education and social sector

*Develop Action Plan and Monitoring Framework

*Data collection,

*The elderly population face multiple physical, social, environmental and financial challenges which affect their mental health. The introduction of state funded pension for elderly has been a significant positive step in their independence and empowerment, contributing to their physical and mental wellbeing. However, neglect and institutional care is an increasing issue which has significant detrimental effects on mental wellbeing of the elderly. The government is committed to providing increased support for elderly and their families in the provision of health care to facilitate living in their home

Mental health in the elderly deserves special focus due to special mental disorders such as dementia, delirium and depression which results in significant morbidity and disability. Carer burnout is also a significant issue when caring for elderly affected by such disorders.

(http://www.searo.who.int/maldives/mediacentre/ental-health-policy-2015-2025.pdf)

*Persons aged 65 an above comprised 5 percent of the total populations in census 2014. There were a total of 16,337 people in this age group, with 8,631 males and 7,706 females. In 2006 the total persons in this age group was 15,729. This figure have remained at a constant level mainly due to the decline in mortality rate. This is due to better health facilities and more awareness and tendency among the people for a fit and happy life