

**Statement by His Excellency Abdulla Shahid at the General
Debate of the 77th Session of the United Nations General
Assembly**

23 September 2022

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Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished delegates,

I congratulate His Excellency Csaba Kőrösi on his assumption of the Presidency of the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Mr. President, you take stewardship of this assembly in extraordinary times. Not since 1945 have we witnessed the international agenda grow in scale so drastically. So relentlessly.

As conflicts grow, as the climate crisis rages, as economies lie in shambles, as we emerge from an era-defining pandemic, we are left anxious and fearful.

Yet, we cannot retreat or linger in despair.

Instead, this moment should make us reflect on the kind of world we want going forward. How can we make it more resilient? More just?

Mr. President,

The Maldives proposes five main areas of focus.

First, we need to address the raging climate crisis.

This crisis remains an existential threat, especially to SIDS.

For us, the difference between 1.5 and 2 degrees is death.

Internationally, the Maldives will continue to lead the way in climate action. In doing so, we will continue to advocate for a rights-based approach.

In 2008, the Maldives and other like-minded countries pursued Human Rights Council resolution 7/23, on human rights and climate change.

After decades of advocacy at the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, in July this year, we celebrated in this Hall, the adoption of the landmark resolution, recognizing the “Human Right to a clean healthy, and sustainable environment”.

We are once again, competing for a seat on the Human Rights Council for the term running 2023 to 2025. If elected, addressing climate change as an integral part of the global human rights discourse, will be among our priorities. We hope to have your support for our candidature.

The Maldives will also set a national example. Like other SIDS, we only make a miniscule contribution to global carbon emissions. We will be the first to bear the consequences.

And yet, we are the ones with some of the most ambitious climate action targets.

We are pursuing an ambitious national plan to reach net zero by 2030, a goal we can only meet with international support.

This year, we launched the Glasgow-Sharm El-Sheikh Work Programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation in the Maldives, with a view to support global action.

I urge the global community – let us do more!

We must act before it is too late.

We also urgently need to protect our ocean.

The Maldives is a large ocean State. Our lives and livelihoods, our culture and traditions are linked to the ocean.

This is why we support the global initiative to protect thirty percent of the world's oceans by 2030. Nationally, we have been working to protect our EEZ. We have now designated seventy-nine marine-protected areas, including fourteen percent of our coral reefs.

Considering the damage caused by plastics to maritime ecosystems, we have also implemented a ban on the importation, production, and sale of several types of single-use plastics. And we have set a national target to fully phase out single-use plastics by 2030.

Excellencies – we only have one planet. Protecting it is our only choice if we care about our continued survival.

Mr. President,

Second, we need sustainable, and reliable sources of financing.

In 2009 in Copenhagen, an ambitious pledge was made, that 100-billion in climate financing would be mobilized by 2020. Even in 2022, we are far short of meeting that pledge. Partners must scale up their efforts to make up the difference.

And we urge our partners to redouble adaptation finance as agreed under the Glasgow Climate Pact in 2021.

It is also important to make access easier for all, especially developing countries.

We know that the world can mobilize resources when required. We know we have the finances. But we need to direct them. We need to make assessments for that financing fairer.

This is why, we have always been staunch supporters of alternative measures to GDP.

Traditional measures of development fail to accurately capture the vulnerabilities of countries and their resilience against external shocks.

In this context, we look forward to the finalization of the Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index by the end of the year, and its swift utilization.

Mr. President

Third, we need gender equality to be at the forefront of our agenda.

For centuries women have had their contributions undervalued and their voices discounted.

This injustice cannot continue. We cannot solve the challenges facing *all* of humanity while half of humanity is denied their full potential.

Women deserve an equal seat at the table.

The Maldives is advancing many legislative and executive initiatives to advance women's representation. The Government has passed legislation to allocate 33 percent of our local council seats to women. We have

appointed women as Supreme Court Justices for the first time. Half of our ambassadors are women.

Despite progress, much remains to be done. Women continue to face a variety of challenges – including misogyny and gender-based violence.

We can and *must* do better.

Mr. President,

Fourth, it is vital the world comes together to solve the peace and security challenges we face.

We need to work harder to stop conflicts and the flagrant violations of international norms undermining the multilateral system we have painstakingly built in the past 77 years.

The people of Ukraine, Afghanistan, Myanmar, among other countries plunged into conflict and bloodshed, deserve peace. They deserve an end to the ongoing tragedies upending their lives.

As do the people of Palestine. The Maldives reiterates that a two-state solution based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, is the only meaningful solution for a lasting peace.

Addressing terrorism should also be a priority. Its menace continues to plague our world and jeopardizes the safety and cohesion of our societies.

The Maldives condemns terrorism in all its forms and will work with the international community to comprehensively combat both terrorism and violent ideologies.

Mr President,

The issues of our time are complex and multifaceted. We cannot apply old solutions to new challenges.

Which brings me to my fifth and final point. **It is vital that we reform the multilateral system and better equip the United Nations to meet contemporary and future challenges.** What we need is a UN 2.0.

This is the thrust of the Secretary General's Report "Our Common Agenda".

We wholeheartedly welcome the recent adoption of a resolution to establish the UN Youth Office by consensus, carrying forward one of the OCA's most important recommendations.

We agree with the underlying spirit of that resolution. We cannot continue to deny the voices of the 1.8 billion young people, especially on decisions that impact their futures.

The Maldives will constructively engage with Member States to continue the follow up process to the OCA report.

Mr. President.

Another critical aspect of revitalizing the United Nations should be reforming the Security Council, a goal the Maldives has advocated for decades.

We have consistently called to increase the number of both permanent and non-permanent seats, while ensuring equitable geographic representation, to make the Council more responsive and responsible.

We also support increasing the substantial role and moral authority of the General Assembly. A welcome decision in this regard, is the recent

adoption of the veto initiative – a resolution Maldives was happy to support.

Mr. President,

The Maldives has always believed that our small size should not diminish our standing in the international arena.

We believe that a rules-based international order, where all states have a voice, and are fairly represented and included, is necessary.

It is our hope that our ongoing efforts at multilateral reform culminates in such an outcome.

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary General,

These extraordinary times we face must be met with extraordinary courage. With extraordinary vision. With extraordinary ambition, and extraordinary leadership.

As we look ahead, the tasks before us may seem daunting. They are immense in scale and borderless in their dimensions.

They are beyond the capacity of any country to address by ourselves.

But together we can meet these challenges.

Together, we have the resources, the power, the imagination to usher in a brighter future for humanity.

The Maldives will continue to work alongside our peer nations in the international community to deliver that vision.

Together, we can.

Thank you.