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MALDIVES

UNOC-ID/02

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Remarks by

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Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Technology

at the "Ocean Action in Support of SDG 14 - The Archipelagic Island States

SIDS Perspective".

28 June 2022

Thank you!

I would like to thank the organizers for initiating this conversation around partnerships and coral reefs with a focus on SIDS, a much-needed conversation in the face of the climate and biodiversity crisis.

In the very recent Stockholm +50 International meeting we recognized the importance of multilateralism in tackling the Earth's triple planetary crisis. Today as we are discussing the Ocean Action in support of the SDG 14, we need to accelerate the collaborative efforts in the management of our coral reef ecosystems, especially among the Small Island Developing States.

As a large ocean state that is heavily dependent on the ocean and its biodiversity, the protection and conservation of the ocean and marine life is very vital to us. With more than 75 per cent of our GDP relying on the oceans and mainly the coral reefs, the ocean IS our livelihood. Apart from the economic benefits these ecosystems provide, they are our first line of defence against the powerful waves and storms. With the changing climate, storms are becoming more frequent and intense. Therefore, the need for management of these reefs is important now more than ever.

In the Maldives, we are observing that 22 species out of the 38 observed are endangered and that among these, reef building coral are unable to adapt to the rising temperatures.



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Known as the rain forests of the seas, much work needs to be done in protecting the reef ecosystem. Marine protected areas are a great way protect important ocean habitats and the marine life whilst also contributing to the economic and environmental growth of the country. We are currently working with the Waitt Institute and the Blue Prosperity Coalition to create an EEZ wide marine spatial plan and designate 20 percent of our marine waters as fully protected.

Till date, Maldives has been able to establish 79 different protected areas panning fifty-four thousand three hundred hectares, a majority of which are coral reefs and magroves. We have also introduced “Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures” or OECMs in the Maldives. Resorts are able to apply as a candidate to designate their house reefs as OECMs. This is a great example of private sector working with government to manage the coral reefs.

Furthermore, in the Maldives we are seeing that resorts are able to mobilise more sustainable forms of coral reef management with the help of coral planting, reef balls and other such technology. We need to tap into innovative financing mechanism to implement such technology in the inhabited islands.

Marine Plastic pollution is the greatest threat to the marine biodiversity in the Maldives. Over 24,000 tons of single use plastic ends up in our oceans affecting the reef ecosystem. Through the ban on production, import and sale of 13 types of most commonly found SUP in our environment, with a full phaseout by 2024, we hope to reduce the plastic leakage into our oceans.

With the need for urgent action, private and public sector needs to work together in order to address the challenges we face in rising finance for conservation and restoration, as well as building capacity in this area. I would like to conclude with the hope that we are able to listen and learn from one another on best practices and the work being done in other Small Island Developing States and that we are able to forge meaningful partnerships between the private and public sector to address these critical challenges.

I thank you.