



MALDIVES

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**Statement by
His Excellency Dr. Abdulla Naseer
Minister of State for Environment, Climate Change and Technology
At the 2023 United Nations Water Conference**

22 March 2023 (TBC)

(5 Minutes)

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Assalamalaikum and a very good afternoon,

1. At the outset, I would like to congratulate the co- hosts of this conference, the governments of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the excellent arrangements made for the UN Water Conference. We welcome adoption of the Water Action Agenda, and believe this conference will act as a catalyst to accelerate the implementation of the Water Action Decade 2018- 2028.

Excellencies,

2. Access to water is a universal right and ensuring that right is a universal obligation. Acting on this universal obligation is critical, especially at this time, as clean and fresh water is necessary to support a resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the world is currently off-track to meet the targets of SDG-6 as some 2.1 billion people lack access to potable water, and by 2030, 700 million people will be displaced due to water scarcity.

Excellencies,



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3. Although the Maldives is surrounded by water, freshwater resources are scarcely limited. The raging climate crisis and its drastic consequences further exacerbate stresses on access to clean water. The only available natural water resources are rain and ground water, both of which are highly vulnerable to climate change. Maldives is regularly exposed to meteorological hazards such as storms, monsoonal heavy rains, storm swells and coastal erosion. We have been grappling with changing rainfall patterns, which has caused droughts in a number of our islands. We heavily depend on rainwater for potable purposes.
4. In addition to the effects of climate change, the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, compromised our water table with saltwater intrusion and pollutant contamination. As a result, we have been forced to rely more and more on water desalination, which is not cost effective. Given the scarcity, ensuring clean water and sanitation for all Maldivians is guaranteed by our constitution, and is a key priority for the current government.

Excellencies,

5. Maldives has made tremendous strides towards achieving the targets of SDG-6. Firstly, the endorsement of the Water and Sanitation act and the umbrella regulations have served as instrumental tools for enhancing governance in the sector, driving notable improvements. Secondly, we have policies that govern the water and sewerage sector priorities and strategies. These policies focus on ensuring access to safe water and adequate sewerage services, adopting water and sewerage infrastructure that is both cost-effective and environmentally friendly, and to build sector capacity in water resources, water supply and sewerage services.
5. Maldives has been working with international partners to advance efforts towards achieving SDG-6. We had great success with the assistance of the Green Climate Fund, through which our first initiative was to get funds for “Support of Vulnerable Communities in Maldives to manage Climate Change – induced water shortages”. Through this support, we have been able to scale up and integrate our water supply system, with a provision of safe water to 32,200 people, production and distribution



of water during the dry season, as well as the recharging and protecting aquifers. In addition, we have integrated water resource management projects in 4 islands and improved rainwater harvesting systems in 25 islands.

Excellencies,

6. Despite making significant advancements, we must emphasize the growing need for enhanced global finance, capacity building and technology transfer to accomplish our goals related to water. These goals cannot be achieved without international cooperation and collaboration.
7. While water insecurity is a human issue, vulnerable groups and peoples are more affected. Water scarcity and contamination disproportionately impact low-income women and girls. Without safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene services, women and girls are more vulnerable to abuse, attack and ill-health, affecting their ability to study, work and live in dignity.

Excellencies,

8. Maldives stands ready to work with all stakeholders to implement the Decade's objectives as water sustains life and is necessary towards achieving our common goals. Let us collectively work together to achieve the promise of safe water and sanitation for all by 2030, with the UN Water's SDG-6 global acceleration framework as a blueprint to guide our efforts.

I thank you.