



# International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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## Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 116th session

### Summary record of the 3169th meeting\*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 18 November 2025, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Balcerzak

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Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States Parties under article 9 of the Convention

*Combined thirteenth to fifteenth periodic reports of Maldives*

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\* No summary records were issued for the 3167th and 3168th meetings.

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States Parties under article 9 of the Convention**

*Combined thirteenth to fifteenth periodic reports of Maldives*  
([CERD/C/MDV/13-15](#); [CERD/C/MDV/Q/13-15](#); [CERD/C/MDV/QPR/13-15](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Maldives joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair**, welcoming the Permanent Representative of Maldives and other members of the delegation to the meeting, explained that some members of the delegation would be participating via video link.
3. **A representative of Maldives**, introducing the combined thirteenth to fifteenth periodic reports of Maldives ([CERD/C/MDV/13-15](#)), said that, for his country, the implementation of the Convention represented not only a legal obligation but also a moral commitment that was aligned with the guarantees of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the Constitution of Maldives and the aspiration to build a society in which diversity was celebrated as a source of strength. The democratic journey of Maldives continued to be shaped by reforms that strengthened institutions, upheld the rule of law and advanced equality and non-discrimination for all. The country's commitment to transparent and inclusive governance had been reaffirmed through its peaceful and credible presidential election in 2023 and parliamentary elections in 2024.
4. The Government was committed to advancing equality, strengthening protections against discrimination and promoting social cohesion. A 20-year national development plan was being drawn up to guide Maldives towards developed-country status by 2040. Scheduled for completion in early 2026, the plan would translate national and international commitments into people-centred, evidence-based policies.
5. Maldives remained strongly committed to the international human rights system, being a Party to eight of the nine core instruments and seven of the optional protocols thereto. It had ratified all eight fundamental International Labour Organization conventions and had begun the process of making the declaration under article 14 of the Convention.
6. Maldives had endorsed the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and stood ready to champion and implement the commitments contained therein. The country continued to play an active role in multilateral affairs; representatives of Maldives were currently serving as Vice-President of the General Assembly and Vice-President of the Human Rights Council. Maldives maintained a standing invitation to all the special procedure mandate holders and had received multiple visits during the reporting period. The national mechanism for implementation, reporting and follow-up, established in 2020, had strengthened the country's engagement with the treaty bodies significantly.
7. According to the 2022 census, foreign nationals accounted for 25.7 per cent of the population, and 88.6 per cent of resident foreign nationals were men. As Maldives lacked a legal framework for receiving asylum-seekers, refugees or stateless persons, it facilitated resettlement in third countries, in full compliance with the principle of non-refoulement. Owing to limited resources, Maldives was constrained in its ability to assume obligations in that regard and to become a Party to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
8. As the population of Maldives was largely homogeneous, sharing the same language, culture, religion and community values, diversity in race and ethnicity arose primarily through labour migration. Much of the practical relevance of the Convention for Maldives thus related to the need to ensure the protection and fair treatment of migrant workers.
9. The protections guaranteed under the Convention were embedded in the Constitution, which guaranteed all rights and freedoms without discrimination, including discrimination based on race or national origin, and upheld equality before the law. Persons whose rights had been infringed had access to both judicial and non-judicial remedies. While the Government did not intend to introduce a stand-alone anti-discrimination law, it remained

committed to maintaining a strong legal framework that ensured robust protections and reflected the principles of the Convention.

10. The Government's current legislative agenda comprised over 200 bills. Since the submission of the report, key legislative reforms had been adopted to reinforce equality and strengthen protections. For example, the Birth and Death Registration Act mandated the prompt registration of all children without discrimination. The Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Industrial Relations Act had significantly enhanced labour protections. A recent amendment to the Employment Act had further strengthened the governance of foreign labour and introduced penalties for discriminatory treatment. Key legal reforms currently in process included an overhaul of the Maldives Immigration Act and the updating of the Family Act, the Domestic Violence Prevention Act and the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Harassment Act. A legal aid bill was also in the pipeline.

11. The rights of migrant workers were consistently prioritized in national laws, policies and enforcement mechanisms. The National Task Force on Issues Related to Migrant Workers, established in 2019, coordinated the transformative regularization programme and implemented sustainable solutions for migrant workers who were undocumented or in an irregular situation. Since the transfer of responsibility for foreign labour matters to the Ministry of Homeland Security and Technology, an assisted voluntary return mechanism had been introduced, and Operation "Kurangi" had been launched to update biometric records. Maldives was strengthening migrant welfare through stricter health insurance requirements, plans for standardized worker dormitories and the recently introduced National Migrant Health Policy. The country had launched a migrant worker resource centre to provide a centralized point for information, grievance redress and referral services in multiple languages. The Migrant Connect portal had enhanced case management and service coordination. In parallel, hate speech had been criminalized through amendments to the Penal Code. While Maldives had made notable progress in ensuring rights protection and equity in service provision for foreign nationals, in particular migrant workers, it recognized the need to further modernize foreign labour management to enhance protection and prevent exploitation.

12. The current dialogue should be viewed in the context of the socioeconomic impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and fiscal constraints. Despite ongoing, comprehensive fiscal measures, resource limitations continued to pose the greatest challenge to the full implementation of the Convention in Maldives.

13. **Mr. Sibande** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would be grateful if the delegation could provide information on the ethnic composition of the State Party's population, including the number of persons belonging to ethnic minorities and the number of non-citizens such as asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons and migrants, taking into account the Committee's general recommendation No. 8 (1990). He wondered whether efforts were being made to gather information on the various ethnic groups in the country through the census. He would appreciate updated, disaggregated statistics on the socioeconomic situation of those various groups, including with regard to the enjoyment of the rights to work, social security, housing, food, water and sanitation, health, education and participation in political and public life. He would welcome an explanation of how the State Party ensured the disaggregation of such statistics by sex, age, ethnic or national origin, migration status and other relevant factors so as to allow for an accurate assessment of the situation with regard to equality and non-discrimination.

14. He would appreciate an update on the efforts being made to integrate the provisions of the Convention into national legislation. He wondered whether there were plans to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that included a definition of racial discrimination covering direct, indirect and multiple forms of discrimination. It would be interesting to learn about the measures that were being taken with regard to article 14 of the Convention.

15. He wondered what challenges had been encountered in implementing the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action at the national level and what strategies had been developed to ensure that it was implemented. He would be grateful for an update on the progress made in enacting the personal data protection bill, the bills on freedom of expression

and freedom of the press, the bill on the right to strike, the bill on protection of vulnerable individuals, the mental health bill, the national registration bill, the legal aid bill and the bills to amend the Disabilities Act, the Social Protection Act and the Anti-Torture Act.

16. He wished to know what measures were being taken to review the Government's position in favour of maintaining the provisions of the Constitution under which only Muslims could acquire citizenship and whether efforts had been made to engage with the public in order to amend those provisions and other laws to allow non-Muslims to become citizens. He wondered whether the delegation could update the Committee on the roles that the Government, public institutions and civil society organizations played in educating the public about the Convention and raising awareness of its provisions and those of the Constitution, both of which promoted principles of equality.

17. He wished to know whether the country planned to lift the ban on the Maldivian Democracy Network and return the money seized from the organization. It would be useful to learn whether the State Party was able to collect data on the various religious groups in the country as part of its efforts to address discrimination based on religion and how it ensured that freedom of religion was enjoyed by groups other than Muslims.

18. He would be grateful if the delegation could update the Committee on the measures taken to diversify the membership of the Human Rights Commission of Maldives, in particular to allow persons other than Muslims to become members. The Government should be aware that limiting eligibility in such a manner would make it difficult to achieve A status in the context of accreditation by the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

19. He wondered what measures were being taken to provide "special assistance or protection" to disadvantaged individuals or groups under article 17 (b) of the Constitution, given that Muslims were not a disadvantaged group in Maldives. It was unclear what steps were being taken to increase the funding provided to the Human Rights Commission, which had recently been reduced, and ensure that it was able to operate without interference or withdrawal of resources. He would be grateful for an update on the steps taken to ensure that the country offered a safe environment in which civil society organizations, human rights defenders, journalists and individuals could prosper and exercise their rights and freedoms without fear of reprisals. The Committee had learned that some Maldivian civil society organizations had been afraid to submit information in connection with the current dialogue.

20. It would be useful to learn whether measures were being taken to amend the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly Act, which imposed severe restrictions on the exercise of the right to assembly. He wished to know what efforts were being made to address and prohibit female genital mutilation as part of the protection and promotion of women's rights and the achievement of gender equality more broadly. As the State Party intended to reinstate the death penalty, he wondered what measures had been taken to investigate and address the perceived corruption and politicization of the judiciary and whether steps were instead being taken to abolish the death penalty.

21. **A representative of Maldives** said that Islam had shaped Maldivian identity for centuries, and the legal framework established under the Constitution was grounded in Islamic principles. While Maldives continued to prioritize equality before the law and the provision of equal rights and services to all persons under its jurisdiction, freedom of religion was not legally recognized for other religions. The legal system did not accommodate practices that fell outside that religious and cultural framework, including in matters of conscience and personal conduct. The Constitution stipulated that only Muslims could acquire Maldivian citizenship, and the Government did not intend to change those provisions or adopt any laws that might contravene Islamic principles.

22. **A representative of Maldives** said that the 2022 census had been conducted in accordance with relevant United Nations principles and recommendations, with data disaggregated by nationality. Labour force data had been compiled in accordance with the standards developed by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians. The census showed that there were over 130,000 foreign nationals contributing to the economy. More than half of resident foreign nationals were from Bangladesh. Nationals of India and Sri Lanka also accounted for significant percentages, followed by nationals of Nepal,

Indonesia and the Philippines. Persons between the ages of 25 and 29 accounted for the largest age group among resident foreign nationals. A significant percentage of foreign nationals in Maldives resided in Male', while the rest lived in the atolls, working mainly in the tourism, construction and service sectors. Labour and migration laws applied equally to all persons in the country.

23. **A representative of Maldives** said that there were no asylum-seekers, refugees or stateless persons living in Maldives on a long-term basis. Maldives was not a party to the relevant international instruments. Whenever such a situation arose, government institutions worked with international agencies to ensure third-country resettlement, as had occurred on a number of occasions. Such situations were assessed on a case-by-case basis and all other international obligations were fulfilled as part of that process.

24. Regarding domestication of the Convention, while Maldives was a dualist country, the principle of non-discrimination was a cornerstone of the Constitution and was reinforced in other laws. The Government ensured that there was no discrimination against foreign nationals, in particular through the application of articles 17 and 20 of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Section 4 of the Employment Act provided for equality in all aspects of employment, including wages, training and conditions. Secondary legislation adopted under the Act codified those protections and banned discrimination based on race and other grounds. The Criminal Procedure Code established due process rights applicable to all persons without discrimination and required State institutions to uphold them. The 2021 amendment to the Penal Code had established the offence of causing injury to another person or inciting injury to another person on the basis of characteristics such as race. With regard to basic service provision, the Education Act, the Health Service Provision Act and the Water and Sewerage Act prohibited discrimination and provided for equal opportunity and access for all. The Occupational Health and Safety Act, passed in 2024, empowered employees to hold employers accountable for unsafe working conditions. The rights enshrined in the Convention were adequately protected within that framework.

25. Article 10 of the Constitution established that the State religion was Islam. The Religious Unity Act prohibited public expressions of other religions, and the Government was not seeking to alter the operation of that law.

26. Maldives was working towards being able to make the declaration under article 14 of the Convention in the near future.

27. Female genital mutilation had not occurred in Maldives in recent times. The only source of information on the practice was a demographic and health survey conducted in 2016 and 2017. Under the current legal framework, any act that constituted female genital mutilation would be dealt with under the Penal Code as abuse, which was also addressed under the Child Rights Protection Act.

28. Maldives had endorsed the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action two decades previously but had not translated the commitments for which it provided into national action plans. Some of its components had been operationalized through such legislation as the Penal Code, the Anti-Torture Act, the Child Rights Protection Act and the Gender Equality Act. Maldives had rolled out dedicated training programmes on those laws for State officials.

29. In accordance with the Constitution, membership of the Human Rights Commission was reserved for Maldivians. It followed from the legal framework governing citizenship, including article 10 of the Constitution, that members must be Muslim. Significant improvements had been made to strengthen the Commission, both in law and in terms of technical resources. In 2020, for example, the Human Rights Commission Act had been amended to restore the Commission's functional autonomy, in particular its capacity to engage with international bodies, and to strengthen safeguards against corruption through the introduction of an asset declaration requirement for members and the creation of a specific code of conduct. The financial resources allocated to the Commission had also increased in recent years, with a significant increase in 2025.

30. The Government was seeking to introduce further amendments to the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly Act. In accordance with the Government's legislative agenda, the scope

of places in which the Ministry of Homeland Security and Technology and the Maldives Police Service allowed protests or mass gatherings had been expanded. The 2021 amendment to the Penal Code represented a key step in protecting civil society organizations and human rights advocates against reprisals. The Associations Act had been overhauled in 2022 to empower civil society organizations, in particular with regard to internal governance and engagement with policymakers.

31. What had occurred with the Maldivian Democracy Network had been an isolated incident. Judicial actors had ensured that the organization's rights had been respected during the dissolution process. In that connection, the Government had engaged constructively with various United Nations entities, and the actions taken had been in accordance with Maldivian law applicable at the time. The Civil Court had later confirmed that the dissolution process had complied with due process safeguards.

32. **A representative of Maldives** said that Maldivian law allowed considerable scope for the exercise of freedom of assembly. Nevertheless, as in many other countries, the exercise of freedom of assembly was restricted near certain protected buildings. Male' occupied a compact land area, meaning that a building such as a police station or court facility was never far away. Although the exercise of freedom of assembly could not be permitted in all parts of the city, there were four designated areas in which the public could gather at any time without notifying the authorities. Permission to assemble in other locations could be requested, and the police would coordinate traffic and assist with law enforcement if permission was granted. The Maldives Police Service had often allowed protests outside the designated areas and had even escorted protesters, providing security and support as required.

33. **A representative of Maldives** said that the death penalty remained lawful in limited circumstances. Enforcement required full judicial safeguards and final confirmation by the Supreme Court. There was an automatic right of appeal. The abolition of the death penalty would require broad public consensus, owing to the operation of article 10 of the Constitution and the incorporation of Islamic principles into national law.

34. **Mr. Sibande** said that he would appreciate responses to his request for information on the collection of statistics on the various religious groups in the State Party with a view to addressing discrimination based on religion and to his question about freedom of religion for persons who were not Muslim. On the latter point, data would be welcome. He wondered whether the State Party's strong commitment to the international human rights system would extend to ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

35. In the context of reports of reduced media independence in Maldives and the fact that the Evidence Act granted courts discretionary powers to compel journalists to disclose their sources, he wished to know what steps were being taken to investigate the online threats reportedly made against the staff of Raajje TV and Channel 13 and to promote media freedom in Maldives. In addition, he would appreciate information on the measures adopted to mitigate the impact of climate change, tourism and development projects on marginalized communities, in particular non-citizens, and to guarantee that victims had access to justice and remedies. It was unclear what steps had been taken to ensure that responses to climate-induced displacement did not discriminate against marginalized groups and preserved cultural identity and community cohesion.

36. **Ms. Chung** (Country Task Force) said that she would be grateful if the delegation could respond to reports of police misconduct and excessive use of force against peaceful protesters and of arrests of migrant workers for religious reasons. She wondered whether the State Party's assertion that there were no or very few asylum-seekers and refugees in Maldives was based on statistical evidence and, if it was, whether the delegation could provide a source. It was unclear why not a single Maldivian non-governmental organization (NGO) had briefed the Committee at the current session. Lastly, she would be grateful for more information on the 20-year national development plan and the strategy for its implementation.

37. **Ms. Boker-Wilson** asked what steps, if any, were being taken to ensure that the Maldives Immigration Act, in particular articles 20 and 21 thereof, which granted the

Controller of Immigration and Emigration broad discretionary authority to revoke a foreign national's residence permit and gave migrant workers whose permits had been revoked little time in which to leave the country, was aligned with article 2 of the Convention.

38. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he wished to know whether judges in the State Party held career appointments until retirement and whether the reasons for which they could be removed were limited to incompetence and misconduct. He would be grateful if the delegation could comment on the separation of powers, as most members of the Judicial Service Commission were not drawn from the judiciary and seemed to be linked to the executive or legislative branch. Given the recent removal of three of the seven judges of the Supreme Court following a parliamentary vote, he wondered whether judges were routinely removed in such a manner and who determined whether an allegation of misconduct should be upheld. A better solution might be to establish an independent tribunal composed of trained members of the judiciary, perhaps even from other countries, so that judges who faced the threat of removal had a fair chance to defend themselves.

39. **Ms. Tlakula** said that, in its concluding observations on the State Party's combined fifth to twelfth periodic reports (CERD/C/MDV/CO/5-12), the Committee had requested the State Party to provide information, by 2012, on its follow-up to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 8 and 12 thereof. Paragraph 8 had concerned the enactment of the anti-discrimination law. The Committee was disappointed that it had not received the requested information.

40. **Mr. Diaby** said that he would be interested to learn whether the Government or the parliament had taken any measures to amend the Human Rights Commission Act with a view to obtaining A status and whether the State Party could commit to promptly reforming the institution to bring it into full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). He wished to know how many civil society organizations in Maldives were working on racial discrimination issues, what their contribution had been in the context of the current dialogue and how many consultations the State Party had held with them in that context. He would be grateful for detailed information on complaints of racial discrimination filed with the Human Rights Commission and other bodies, including the number of such complaints and their outcomes.

41. **A representative of Maldives** said that migrant workers were deported primarily for involvement in criminal activities or in business activities without permits, in violation of Maldivian law and their visa conditions. Migrant workers retained the right to challenge a deportation order in court.

42. Maldives had long respected freedom of religion. However, there were no public places of worship for religions other than Islam, just as, in many other countries, there were no places of worship for Muslims. In addition, owing to the country's small land area and the fact that the majority of the population was Muslim, it was difficult to allocate the necessary space. Migrant workers who followed religions other than Islam had long been free to practise their religion in their own homes.

43. With regard to the online threats against Raajje TV and Channel 13, Maldives had specific legal provisions on harm or threats of harm against individuals, and the Maldives Police Service took such matters seriously. Nevertheless, there was little that could be done when the perpetrators were anonymous, as was often the case online, and the authorities received limited cooperation from social media platforms in that regard.

44. The visas granted to migrant workers included restrictions on their right to participate in political activities in Maldives. The purpose of those restrictions was to protect migrant workers and ensure harmony within communities, as not all migrant workers in the country shared the same political views. Maldives lacked the resources to ensure that migrant workers of opposing political views could safely protest in all parts of the country. In any event, the extent to which foreign nationals could influence the situation in their countries of origin by staging small protests on remote Maldivian islands remained uncertain.

45. **A representative of Maldives** said that, owing to a limited resource envelope, Maldives was not currently in a position to become a signatory to the International

Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. However, the protections for migrant workers established thereunder were already ensured through the national legal framework. As noted earlier, Maldives was not a party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

46. With regard to the concerns raised about powers to compel journalists to divulge their sources, the Office of the Attorney General had entered into dialogue with affected parties. It was hoped that the draft amendment to the Evidence Act currently before the parliament would address those concerns.

47. The impact of climate change remained an ongoing challenge for Maldives. The country had a large population of migrant workers to consider when preparing communities and building their resilience. The Climate Emergency Act mandated the State to develop the necessary plans and enhance adaptation across all sectors. In its third nationally determined contribution, submitted in February 2025, Maldives had recognized the compounded vulnerability of migrant workers in the context of climate change. With regard to disaster management, Maldives would eventually face climate-induced displacement. The legal framework, together with the National Disaster Management Authority, ensured both disaster preparedness and resilience and the provision of humanitarian relief in the event of a disaster. The Disaster Management Act required State institutions to disseminate disaster information and warnings to the public in foreign languages. The regulation on the provision of humanitarian assistance, relief and recovery aid in disasters governed the provision of basic services and explicitly prohibited discrimination based on such characteristics as race, nationality, gender, age and religion. Inclusive national priorities were identified under the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for 2024–2030. In partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, a multilingual disaster preparedness and risk communication platform, known as “Hushiyaaru”, had been launched to provide early warning alerts, awareness materials and preparedness tools in five languages.

48. The preparation of the 20-year national development plan was currently at the data collection and policy formulation stages. The plan would be aimed at transforming Maldives into a fully developed nation by 2040, in line with the Government’s Vision 2040. It was a bottom-up and inclusive initiative, involving broad consultations with communities. Expert focus group consultations were also being undertaken to inform the plan.

49. Significant judicial reforms had been implemented during the reporting period to strengthen the rule of law, public confidence, transparency and impartiality. The 2019 amendment to the Judicial Service Commission Act had enhanced the autonomy of the Department of Judicial Administration by codifying its mandate. The independent Judicial Service Commission was constitutionally mandated to oversee the affairs of judges, all of whom were appointed for life unless dismissed under procedures prescribed by law. The 2019 amendment had created a transparent and comprehensive procedure for investigating complaints against judges and ensuring that judges were given an opportunity to defend themselves. The current Administration was committed to evaluating the composition of the Commission to ensure greater impartiality and transparency. Its initiatives in that regard included training programmes on human rights for judges, an institutionalized appraisal process through which over 90 per cent of sitting judges had been evaluated and a requirement for judges to submit annual asset declarations. To bridge the gap between the public and the judiciary, the Commission had established an online portal for the anonymous submission of complaints.

50. **A representative of Maldives** said that there had been gaps in the fulfilment by Maldives of its reporting obligations under international human rights mechanisms. Previously, reports had been prepared by temporary bodies established for that purpose, which had been dissolved once they had completed that task. On 5 November 2020, recognizing the need for a permanent structure, the President had established the national mechanism for implementation, reporting and follow-up, which was mandated to coordinate the preparation of reports for submission to international human rights mechanisms and oversee the implementation of and follow-up to treaty obligations and treaty body recommendations. The mechanism worked in coordination with ministries, State bodies, the



parliament and the judiciary and consulted the Human Rights Commission and civil society organizations.

51. **A representative of Maldives** said that the national mechanism for implementation, reporting and follow-up invited all civil society organizations and NGOs working on rights issues to contribute to the reports that Maldives periodically submitted. In each case, following a public announcement, a dialogue was held with civil society. The Government strove to empower organizations focused on rights advocacy, and such empowerment was one of two components of the mandate of the recently established Office for Civil Rights. The Government had organized a national civil society organization forum in 2025, which had attracted broad engagement.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.50 p.m. and resumed at 5.05 p.m.*

52. **Ms. Chung** said that more detailed information was needed on the implementation of the legislative and policy framework relating to the situation of migrants, including its enforcement and the response to violations. She wondered whether there were plans to amend section 4 of the Employment Act to explicitly include national origin as a prohibited ground of discrimination and whether the National Task Force on Issues Related to Migrant Workers was operational. It would be useful to learn whether the State Party had a plan to address the practice of “quota trading”, whereby migrant workers were subcontracted to third-party employers, to reduce their vulnerability to exploitation. She would appreciate information on measures taken to address the commercialization of regularization certifications and allegations of abuse in the granting of migrant status.

53. She wished to know what measures had been taken to improve the situation of migrant workers in labour-intensive manual work, including with regard to lack of social protection, confiscation of passports and non-payment of wages. She wondered why the application of the minimum wage to migrant workers had been indefinitely postponed under the 2022 amendment to the Employment Act and whether a timeline had been set for implementation. Information on measures taken to ensure the payment of wages by employers and on the sanctions imposed on employers who failed to respect their obligations in that regard would be welcome. She would be grateful if the delegation could comment on reports that migrant workers lived in unsafe conditions and poorly maintained housing and indicate what measures had been taken to improve their living conditions. It would be useful to learn what measures had been taken to combat discrimination against migrant workers in the context of emergency situations.

54. She would appreciate information on the implementation of the National Migrant Health Policy and wondered how it had helped, in practice, to address systemic barriers and discrimination in healthcare access, in particular for vulnerable migrant communities.

55. She wished to know what measures had been taken to facilitate the lodging of complaints by migrant workers whose rights had been violated. She would appreciate updated statistics on inspections carried out, violations identified, sanctions imposed and remedies provided under the Employment Act and relevant regulations. She would be grateful for clarification as to the measures being taken to address the human resource challenges faced by the Labour Relations Authority.

56. Information on measures taken to address xenophobic discrimination against migrant workers and on complaints of violence and xenophobic attacks against migrants and investigations into such cases would be welcome.

57. With regard to the situation of women migrant workers, she would appreciate migrant labour statistics disaggregated by gender and type of work, and information on such issues as the position of women migrant workers in the labour market, the gender pay gap, job segregation and sexual harassment. She wondered what measures had been taken to raise awareness of the Sexual Abuse and Harassment Prevention Act among all employees and employers in both the public and the private sectors, whether training would be provided in different languages to ensure that it was accessible to migrant workers and what mechanisms had been adopted to monitor its implementation in all areas of employment. She also wished to know whether the State Party had established a comprehensive care system to strengthen

support, including medical and psychological support, counselling and rehabilitation services, for victims, including victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

58. She would appreciate information on the specific results of operations launched to regularize the situation of undocumented migrant workers, such as Operation “Kurangi” and Operation “Hamamagu”, and how those operations had contributed to improving access to fundamental rights. She wondered what measures had been taken to prevent refoulement and collective expulsions from being carried out without an adequate assessment of protection needs and to prohibit the deportation of foreign nationals, in particular on religious grounds.

59. She would be grateful if the delegation could explain what specific measures had been taken to ensure that detention was used only as a last resort and that alternatives were applied; to guarantee that migrant workers were afforded, in law and in practice, all fundamental legal safeguards from the outset of deprivation of liberty; to address the discriminatory conditions to which migrants were reportedly subjected in places of detention; and to separate migrants awaiting deportation or regularization from convicted persons.

60. She would welcome statistics on stateless persons, disaggregated by nationality, gender and age, and information on the legislative and policy framework concerning them. She wondered what measures had been taken to prevent statelessness and ensure that all children born in Maldives, including to undocumented migrant workers, were registered at birth without discrimination. It would be useful to know what steps had been taken towards ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance without further delay. Information on steps taken to ratify and fully implement the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness would also be useful.

61. She would appreciate updated statistics on the number of cases of trafficking in persons and the number of cases in which investigations had been conducted, sanctions imposed and remedies provided to victims. It would be useful to receive information on the implementation of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act and the National Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan and additional information on other measures taken to combat trafficking in persons, including through international cooperation, and to strengthen mechanisms for the identification and protection of victims and their referral to appropriate services.

62. **A representative of Maldives** said that section 4 of the Employment Act prohibited discrimination in all aspects of employment, including the determination of wages, based on characteristics such as race and colour. That provision was applied within the broader ambit of article 17 of the Constitution, in which national origin was listed as a prohibited ground of discrimination. National law thus adequately ensured non-discrimination.

63. The 2024 amendment to the Employment Act required migrant workers to obtain approval through specific mechanisms before coming to work in Maldives and had introduced a comprehensive list of conditions that employers must meet before bringing workers into the country. With regard to enforcement, the amendment had empowered the Ministry to carry out targeted inspections and had created a mechanism for the imposition of punitive measures on employers who exploited foreign labour. The provisions in question were complemented by the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

64. **A representative of Maldives** said that, in 2019, the National Task Force on Issues Related to Migrant Workers had been established to coordinate the regularization programme and to develop a holistic approach to addressing the situation of migrant workers without documentation. It had first focused on finding sustainable long-term solutions for undocumented workers and improving the overall management of irregular migration. That had included establishing a better-equipped detention facility, addressing cases of undocumented workers and identifying and responding to illegal business activities conducted by migrant workers. A key policy decision had also been taken to allow undocumented workers reported as missing before 2019 to regularize their status in cases in which employers had failed to pay the required work permit fees. The Ministry of Homeland Security and Technology, which had since taken over responsibility for foreign labour, had made substantial progress in both addressing the issue of undocumented workers and

strengthening the enforcement of the applicable regulatory framework. The immigration and border control system had been integrated with the system used by the Department of Foreign Labour. Real-time data synchronization enabled more accurate tracking of migrant entries and exits and allowed employers to cancel work permits for workers who were no longer employed, on the basis of verified border movement records.

65. Operation “Kurangi” had been launched in May 2024 to update the biometric records of all migrant workers in Maldives, including those without valid documentation. The second phase of the operation, scheduled to begin in December 2025, would be focused on regularizing the status of workers in an irregular situation whose biometric data had already been updated. Undocumented workers who had completed the biometric updates would be eligible for government assistance, including quota allocation and work permit issuance for those who had sponsors, as well as job-matching services for those seeking to regularize their status.

66. **A representative of Maldives** said that the minimum wage had been implemented in 2022 and was to be reviewed every two years. The review currently under way was scheduled for completion by 31 December 2025. There were plans to recommend ways in which migrant workers could be covered by the new minimum wage. It was hoped that the new minimum wage would be implemented in January 2026.

67. **A representative of Maldives** said that the Labour Relations Authority had imposed fines on employers who had failed to pay wages on time. The Authority was working with the Ministry of Finance to increase its human resources. It was hoped that the situation would improve in 2026.

68. **A representative of Maldives** said that the Ministry of Health ensured that emergency care was available to all without discrimination or upfront payment. To improve access to routine healthcare, the Ministry was reviewing protocols and exploring solutions for undocumented migrants facing identification barriers. The Ministry coordinated with NGOs, including the Maldivian Red Crescent, to support hospitalized patients and conducted regular awareness-raising to reinforce its commitment to equality and non-discrimination in healthcare.

69. The National Migrant Health Policy, launched in 2025, was a key strategic measure to address the issues that had been identified over the years, in particular since the COVID-19 pandemic, with regard to access to healthcare services for migrant workers. It was aimed at protecting the health rights of migrant workers, reducing disease transmission and integrating migrants into the national health system, thereby ensuring alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. Through a dedicated coordination mechanism, all responsible sectors were engaged in reducing the burden of disease among migrant populations and improving their health status in all phases of the migration cycle. The Policy would address the gaps that had been identified, including with regard to insurance coverage and social protection. The Ministry of Health was in the early stages of developing an action plan for the Policy and was coordinating discussions with stakeholders to identify implementation activities such as expanding coverage for long-term visa holders and revising the applicable criteria on the basis of research and best practices from other host countries. The action plan was expected to be endorsed by early 2026.

70. **A representative of Maldives** said that the Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse Act and the Domestic Violence Prevention Act were the two key pieces of legislation for preventing sexual harassment and violence against foreign workers. They were both applicable to all foreign nationals in the country. Maldives was in the process of amending the Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse Act to strengthen the workplace redress mechanism.

71. **A representative of Maldives** said that measures such as citation notices and voluntary repatriation processes had been introduced as alternatives to detention. For many years, the Government had implemented a regularization process for migrants in an irregular situation. Migrant workers were detained only as a last resort. During detention, they were guaranteed access to medical care and legal services, and no one was subjected to discrimination on the basis of religion, race or ethnicity. When a migrant was placed in

detention, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was informed so that the relevant consular authorities could be notified.

72. **A representative of Maldives** said that Maldives was not a party to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Under the current constitutional and legal framework, there was no capacity to recognize refugee status, grant asylum or establish related procedures. The Government continued to consider such situations on a case-by-case basis, with due regard to domestic law and treaty obligations, in close coordination with relevant national stakeholders and in partnership with United Nations mechanisms present on the ground.

73. **A representative of Maldives** said that Maldives had strengthened its anti-trafficking architecture through the Maldives Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan, which had been approved by the National Anti-Human Trafficking Coordination Committee in March 2025 and endorsed by the President. The plan had introduced quarterly implementation cycles, enhancing accountability mechanisms and long-term initiatives to ensure continuity and address gaps identified in earlier national action plans. Maldives continued to deepen its engagement with regional and global partners in that regard. In November 2024, the Anti-Trafficking Office had assumed a leadership role in implementing action item 14 of the 2024–2026 forward workplan developed by the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. In July 2025, together with the International Organization for Migration and within the framework of the Bali Process, Maldives had hosted a national conference on institutional roles and responsibilities and measures to combat trafficking in persons. Previous action plans had covered the periods 2015–2019 and 2020–2022, with the implementation of the latter plan extended by one year. The Maldives Police Service and the Anti-Trafficking Office were responsible for ensuring the safety and protection of victims. The Office provided temporary shelter to victims of trafficking in persons, as well as psychosocial support, legal aid and special visas allowing foreign nationals to remain and work legally during investigations. That said, under the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, victims who had entered Maldives without authorization could also be deported. Traffickers could have their assets and profits seized, but there had been no reported cases in which prosecutors had sought restitution or courts had awarded damages to victims during the reporting period. Between 2020 and 2025, 14 cases had been investigated, and 2 were currently at the prosecution stage.

74. **A representative of Maldives** said that the Employment Act, which provided for substantial penalties against labour exploitation, had been improved significantly. The systems in place to manage foreign labour in Maldives were fully audited to prevent “quota trading”. Any cases that still occurred were investigated. The Ministry of Homeland Security and Technology was spearheading the construction of dormitories in line with international standards to ensure proper accommodation facilities for all migrant workers. In the meantime, robust inspections of housing were being carried out, and any violations identified were treated as exploitation. Foreign workers had previously been required to hand in their passports to Maldives Immigration for visa purposes. However, under the new e-visa system, which would soon become operational, they would no longer have to do so, reducing the risk of confiscation.

75. With regard to the regularization programme, the second phase of Operation “Kurangi” was under way to ensure that all biometrically identified migrant workers who lacked proper documents were given a reasonable period in which to obtain them. Employers who required additional capacity were encouraged to offer work to migrants who were currently unemployed. The Government had launched a portal, Migrant Connect, to assist migrant workers in filing complaints and requesting support if they had been exploited or needed information on returning to regular employment.

76. **A representative of Maldives** said that, under the Child Rights Protection Act, every child born in Maldives had the right to be registered and to be given a legally acceptable name. Under the Birth and Death Registration Act, all children, regardless of their parents’ status, had to be registered in Maldives within seven days of birth. Government institutions were responsible for ensuring compliance. All children in Maldives had access to all basic services, including healthcare and education.

77. Sectoral institutions undertook advocacy programmes to address such issues as xenophobia, bullying and hate speech. Sessions were conducted to promote compassion, respect and inclusivity, with special emphasis on vulnerable groups. The Human Rights Commission also conducted human rights awareness sessions in schools, with a focus on human rights, children's rights and respect for the rights of others. In the health sector, clinical and programme management training sessions included components for healthcare professionals on eliminating discrimination in service provision.

78. **Mr. Sibande** said that he wished to know what mechanism had been put in place to allow civil society organizations and international groups to access data on trafficking in persons and what strategies were currently being implemented to combat trafficking. He would appreciate an update on the progress made in setting up the database mentioned in paragraph 150 of the State Party's report. He would be grateful for statistics on sexual abuse and harassment in workplaces and wondered whether the Government was able to track those cases and assess whether the remedies offered to victims were effective and adequate.

79. **Ms. Chung** asked whether quotas for migrant workers had a standard duration, whether renewal was possible, whether workers could bring their families to Maldives and whether, once there, they could change their place of work.

80. **Ms. Boker-Wilson** said that the State Party's response to her question on the powers of the Controller of Immigration and Emigration raised the question of whether the severity of an offence committed by a migrant worker negated or should negate the State Party's obligations under the Convention. As migrant workers who had been ordered to leave the country were given little time in which to do so, it would be useful to know whether the time allowed in that context was consistent with the time allowed by law for the filing of challenges to such orders.

81. **Ms. Tlakula** asked whether the 2021 amendment to the Anti-Human Trafficking Act had come into effect, whether the State Party had ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and, if not, whether it planned to do so.

82. **Mr. Diaby** said that he would be grateful for information on progress reports that the State Party had submitted to the United Nations on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 1 to 3, and on the current status of implementation of the Goals, including with regard to Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent.

83. **Ms. Stavrinaki** asked what measures had been taken to prevent breaches of the customary law principle of non-refoulement in respect of women migrants who were domestic workers, whether the State Party recognized that they were racialized and therefore protected under the Convention and what measures the State Party was taking to fulfil its obligations under the Convention in that regard.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*