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**Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Republic of Maldives  
MEDIA RELEASE**

**Maldives Ambassador Updates UN High Commissioner on Human Rights  
Progress**

H.E. Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Mohamed, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations Office at Geneva today met with H.E. Ms. Louise Arbour, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in order to discuss the latest human rights developments in the Maldives. During the meeting, both sides recognized and welcomed recent positive developments including the removal of the gender bar for Presidential Office and the strengthening of constitutional provisions on freedom of assembly as “extremely important” developments.

Ambassador Ghafoor briefed the High Commissioner on important progress in the Special Majlis, which has now almost finalized the substantive chapters of the new Constitution. The Ambassador noted that, considering the unprecedented nature of many of the concepts included in the new Constitution, this was a remarkable achievement and was testimony to the hard-work and dedication of all Members of the Special Majlis.

The Ambassador went on to brief the Ms. Arbour on steps being taken to ensure that this year’s Presidential election will be free and fair, and will enjoy the trust and support of domestic and international stakeholders. He noted that the Government has requested electoral support, including the dispatch of election monitors, from the EU, Commonwealth and the UN. He also explained the Government’s strong opposition to calls for the replacement of the democratically elected government with an unelected and undemocratic transitional government.

Finally, the Ambassador and Ms. Arbour discussed recent steps to bring Maldives laws and practices into line with international human rights standards. They discussed the designation of the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives as the National Preventative Mechanism under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture; the recent visit of the UN

Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture; the Government's move to become party to 8 of the 9 core international human rights conventions and steps taken to improve treaty reporting; and the upcoming visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression.

Ambassador Ghafoor noted that human rights progress in the Maldives has been achieved, in large part, thanks to the excellent cooperation and assistance received from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), including the decision to dispatch an OHCHR human rights advisor to the Maldives. In response, Ms. Arbour said she was very encouraged by human rights developments in the Maldives and that the OHCHR will continue to help wherever it can.

At the end of the meeting, the two officials discussed the Maldives' initiative to convene a debate on human rights and climate change in the UN Human Rights Council. Ms. Arbour noted that she was extremely enthusiastic about the initiative, and both sides agreed to cooperate towards its successful conclusion.

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