

**INTERVENTION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF MALDIVES
THE MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND AGRICULTURE
HONOURABLE DR. MOHAMED SHAINEE**

AT

39th FAO CONFERENCE

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Chairperson,
Director General,
Fellow Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all, let me also join the other delegations by congratulating, Director General José Graziano da Silva for his well-deserved re-election. Your re-election demonstrates the appreciation of the Member Countries of your outstanding leadership in the FAO for the past four years. It bears witness to the strong commitment you have given to issues of individual nations to stimulate its fisheries and agriculture potential and governance of global food security.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Director General and the 39th Conference Secretariat for the warm welcome and kind hospitality provided to me and my delegation.

Mr. Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,

FAO is one of the first United Nations organizations that the Maldives joined in 1972. During the past 4 decades we have had a very close relationship with FAO. Hence, on behalf of my Government and President Abdulla Yamin Abdul Gayyoom, and I personally convey my sincere appreciations for the assistance provided to the Maldives to develop the fisheries and agriculture, most importantly the rural sector of the Maldives. In the past, we have benefited from a number of projects in the areas of strengthening legal framework for fisheries and agriculture as well as interventions in natural resources management, support to agriculture extension, emergency pest control programmes and more. We are also beneficiaries of several trainings and technical meetings that are organized by FAO in the region and elsewhere.

I would like to acknowledge that, under the leadership of the Director General, FAO has become more dynamic and current in addressing the issues of food security well in advance through strategic planning. The first Maldives Country Programming Framework was signed in 2013 giving strong emphasis to address the daunting impact of climate change on agriculture and fisheries development. Almost 89% of our GDP is based on natural resources and any impacts, especially climate change, will have drastic effects on the livelihood of the entire population. The FAO framework sets out relevant priority areas to guide FAO and the Government of Maldives to mitigate and adapt these drastic impacts and to support the developmental priorities of the country. The core areas for development include enhancing agricultural productivity and

competitiveness through developing climate smart agriculture and strengthening sustainable livelihood through advancement of small-scale aquaculture.

In support of the first country programming framework, Maldives is receiving assistance in the areas of strengthening rural statistics, income generation of farmers through small scale egg production, increasing resiliency of farmers and fishers to climate change, development of standards for good agriculture practices, strengthening vessel monitoring control and surveillance mechanisms, development of aquaculture, management of forest invasive species as well as management of fisheries resources through regional and country level programmes.

Hence, it is my gratitude to thank the FAO Representative to the Maldives, Ms Beth Crawford for her continued support to us.

Mr. Chairperson,

As we all know and had experienced, climate change is a major challenge not only to food security, but to the national development of many countries present here today. The recent natural disasters in countries like Nepal and Japan, bears witness to the devastations that it can bring upon to a country.

Mr. Chairperson,

Maldives been the most vulnerable country in the world lying only a meter above sea level, with an extremely fragile natural environment, must take measures to bolster resilience and adapt to climate change. Sea level rise, precipitation, temperature and extreme events related climate variability is

threatening food security and livelihood of the fisheries and agriculture dependent communities.

Hence, strengthening adaptation and mitigation through social protection programmes and natural resource management is key to bringing resilience to the fisheries and agriculture sector.

Mr. Chairperson,

Reflecting on yesterday's keynote speech of former president of Brazil, His Excellency, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, on breaking the cycle of rural poverty by strengthening rural resilience, we, the Maldives have also taken similar steps. In this regard, the government of Maldives has taken steps in introducing income and climate insurance programmes for both fisheries and agriculture instead of dependent social protection programmes such as subsidies. These contributory programmes help the fishermen earn a minimum wage during the low fishing season and the farmers to earn compensation for their losses in adverse weather conditions. We believe over protection and subsidy will not bring resiliency. Instead as the old saying goes " give a fisherman a fish and he will eat once but if we give him a pole and line he will fish for the rest of his life.

Hence, Maldivian pole and line fishery is recognized as one of the most sustainable fisheries in the world. Almost one in five persons in the Maldives earn their living from the fisheries sector. The need for managing our fisheries for the betterment of our future generations is imminent. With strong commitment and assistance from our development partners including FAO, Maldives is well recognized in the global fisheries community as the champion in the Indian Ocean in the area of fisheries

management and we intend to help to replicate our success in other parts of the world. However, being a small island country, our voice is less echoed among more opportunistic nations. Nevertheless, we look forward to a better platform to work together holistically to bring the needed interventions.

Mr. Chairperson,

As we heard yesterday in the High Profile meeting of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the Small Island nations face a host of different challenges in the development, especially due to climate change. It is questionable that the current development economic theories are relevant to small economies like ours. Smallness or economy of scale is a limitation to continue development projects sustainably. Perhaps the academia needs to re-write theories and models to find a solution for the development of SIDS as highlighted by the Hon Prime Minister of St. Vincent and Cape Verde during the High Level Panel on SIDS by St. Vincent. Towards this direction, yesterday FAO has taken an encouraging step to work closely with the SIDS as cluster to strengthen the economies of scale.

Mr. Chairperson,

We understand the excitement felt by SIDS in the African, Pacific and the Caribbean regions after signing the MoU with FAO.

As witnessed yesterday, now Maldives has an added challenge of being the only SIDS in the Indian Ocean. We find it difficult to find a regional cluster with similar issues. I hope FAO have not lost Maldives, one of the most vulnerable SIDS in the world, in between the large waves of the Indian Ocean.

Mr Chairperson, therefore Maldives looks forward to working with FAO and remain committed to improve and develop the national capacity to better equip and adapt to climate change and its impact in the food security sector.

Thank you.