



Address by His Excellency Uz. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives,
at the Reception Hosted by the United Nations Agencies in Malé to Commemorate the 50th
Anniversary of the United Nations, at Nasandhura Palace Hotel.

The Resident Coordinator of the UN System's Operational Activities in the Maldives, Mr. Narinder Kakar, Honourable Ministers, Representatives of the UN Agencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am delighted to be with you this evening as you mark the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations. First, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Kakar, and all your UN colleagues on this happy occasion. I also wish to thank you for the commitment and enthusiasm with which you have undertaken to serve the Maldives, since you assumed the post of Resident Coordinator three months ago. I would like to pay special tribute to your predecessor, Dr. Mohammed Farashuddin, for the personal involvement and dedication demonstrated by him in the discharge of his duties. Let me also express my appreciation to the former Resident Representatives of UNDP, Ms Maxin Olson and Mr. Jacob Guijt and their predecessors for their very valuable service to us.

I was extremely happy to have been able to participate at the Special Commemorative Meeting held at the United Nations headquarters to celebrate the occasion. The achievements of the United Nations and its agencies during the past fifty years have been numerous. Its contribution to maintaining world peace and security, conflict settlement, peacemaking, peace-keeping, decolonisation, disarmament, the abolition of racial discrimination and other forms of discrimination, the protection of human rights, the advancement of women, the social and economic progress of all nations, human resource development, and in many other areas testify to the success of the United Nations.

Indeed, the United Nations and its family of affiliated agencies have contributed immensely to the advancement of all the member states. The benefits of their service are visible every where, including the Maldives. WHO has helped us eradicate malaria while combined efforts of WHO and UNICEF have greatly reduced the incidence of diarrhoea and childhood diseases. Their very effective

programme of immunisation has led to universal coverage of immunisation in the Maldives. As a result, our infant mortality rate has been brought down to thirty per thousand from as high as a hundred and twenty-one per thousand in 1977.

The UNDP is, I believe the world's largest channel for multi-lateral grant assistance. Its support in our development efforts has been substantial. It has contributed to strengthening our national capacity for sustainable growth by its input to human resource development, environmental management, and integrated rural development. We are very pleased about the progressive increase in the assistance provided to us by the UN agencies, and in particular, the significant rise in the UNDP/IPF for the present cycle. Corresponding to that, our own annual contribution to UNDP too has been increased.

UNICEF's assistance in the areas of education, health, and women's development are significant, while UNCDF has played an important role in infrastructure development and the promotion of traditional fisheries. UNESCO's technical assistance and UNFPA's involvement in our population programmes and related activities are also worthy of note. This is, by no means, an exhaustive list. Many other UN Agencies too have contributed much to our development programmes. I am confident that the Maldives will continue to benefit substantially from the United Nations and its agencies.

The United Nations has been criticised by many. Many small and developing states feel that their special needs have not always been fully addressed. But we have to be realistic, and accept that the United Nations cannot perform miracles.

It is a matter of deep concern to us that the financial constraints of the United Nations have led to drastic cuts in its expenditure on development assistance to LDCs. This, I believe, may not be the ideal solution to its financial problem. Rather, the United Nations has to streamline its wide-ranging programmes to ensure better utilisation of its resources.

As already mentioned, the United Nations has, in the past fifty years, played an important role in maintaining world peace. The sense of security the United Nations has created around the world by its very existence cannot be under-estimated. So there is no denying that the world needs the United Nations. The United Nations must continue its journey, restructured, and re-energised to meet the new challenges the world is faced with. We look to the United Nations for protection and support in all aspects of life. We are hopeful that the United Nations will be instrumental in realising a world of peace, and act as a vehicle for shared global prosperity.

Thank you.

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