

Statement by Minister of State Ms. Ifham Hussain

Thank you madam chair

Excellencies, honorable speakers, distinguished guests, representatives from government and civil societies. It is a great honor to represent the Maldives and be part of the session. I am inspired by the spirit of collaboration among governments and civil societies represented at this meeting. On behalf of the MALDIVES, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak with you all.

The government of Maldives is committed to ensuring the rights and wellbeing of Persons with Disabilities. The regulations and standards made under the Disability Act 2010, of the Maldives, has helped implement many current services and programs. Awareness programs are conducted across Maldives, specifically on 'Early Identification and Intervention' and on 'UNCRPD, Disability Act and the regulations under the Act'. Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Program launched in 2021 by the Ministry has helped us to decentralize and increase accessibility to Rehabilitations and other targeted services across the country.

Efforts are being made to increase employment opportunities and reduce discrimination faced by PWDs within the job market. Since 2019, we have started shifting previous approaches towards aligning profiles of PWDs to their job demands while working for employment opportunities. Hence, policy changes have been brought to the Civil Service Regulation to accommodate and promote employment of PWDs within the government sector.

The geography of the Maldives makes it challenging to ensure accessibility in many aspects such as transportation, access to services and information. Recent policy initiatives have been made by the Ministry to minimize the current issues in accessibility within the public transport systems. In order to increase access to information, media outlets are captioning their content, using sign language interpreters and share disability inclusive information on different platforms.

Social Protection Programs to offer financial aid and services to Persons with Disabilities began in 2010 with the implementation of Disability Act. It first started by providing monthly

financial assistance and currently, the program has expanded to provide financial assistance to assistive devices, psychological profiling and assistance to those living under poverty line.

This program was enhanced in 2019, by providing financial assistance for therapeutic services. National Social Protection Agency is now working to launch the National Disability Registry System with revision to the current social protection programs by the end of 2022.

Ministry of Education is mandated to establish quality education to PWDs. Inclusive Education Policy 2021 is formulated under Article 8 Education Act, to ensure the rights of all students to education. Additionally, The Ministry of Higher Education recently started developing avenues to increase access to higher educational opportunities and skilled based training programs for the PWDs.

Though progress has been made in the Disability Sectors, there are key areas that needs to be addressed to ensure the Rights and Wellbeing of Persons with Disabilities, and every effort is being made to promote an inclusive, accessible and sustainable society for all Maldivians.