

Foreword

The Maldives is now facing an extraordinary challenge. We must make decisions now that no other Maldivian generation has ever had to contemplate before. Climate change is a threat to the very existence of our home, the low-lying small coral islands of the Maldives; it is a threat to our society, living in harmony with the fragile island ecosystem; and it is a threat to our economy based on tourism and fisheries. Maldives is among the most vulnerable and least defensible countries to the projected impacts of climate change and associated sea level rise.

The extraordinary challenge before the present generation is to make the Maldives resilient and adaptable. To do this we must be fully aware of the vulnerability and fragility of our ecosystem; we have to understand present global trends and their consequences on this ecosystem; and we have to transcend any limitations on our thinking in a truly ingenious fashion. The question is whether we have the sufficient vision and resolve to do this. I believe we do.

Twelve years ago, at the Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise held in Maldives, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom said, *“there must be a way out. Neither the Maldives nor any small island nation wants to drown. That’s for sure. Neither do we want our lands eroded or our economies destroyed. Nor do we want to become environmental refugees either. We want to stand up and fight”*.

Maldives is a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the first country to sign the Kyoto Protocol. Maldives believes fully in the objective of the Convention and national policies are guided by the precautionary principle. We fully subscribe to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities to mitigate climate change.

Maldives has completed its first National Communication to the UNFCCC through the Enabling Activities Programme, funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF). This is the beginning of a process to meet the reporting obligations of the country under the Convention. The first National Communication incorporating the National Strategy and Action Plan was developed after intensive consultations among government and non-governmental organisations. It contains the results of technical studies, observations and findings of assessments conducted through field studies, and scientific studies undertaken with guidance from experts. Everyone involved in the preparations of this Communication believes the process to have been extremely useful and successful, and underscores the need to continue the managerial and technical capacity building exercise in to the future.

The first National Communication of Maldives will serve as a basis for concrete future actions. I am optimistic that it will pave the way to assist our nation in adapting to climate change impacts in a more sustainable and consolidated way. The Maldives is fully committed in implementing the policies and measures identified in our National Strategy and Action Plan to mitigate climate change. It is my sincere hope that the international community will recognise our vulnerability and will work as partners in saving our home.

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