

Welcoming ceremony
The Republic of Maldives
Statement by H.E. Mr. Jorge Lomónaco
Vice-President of the Assembly of States Parties

Mr. President,
Madame Registrar,
Mr. Mochochoko,
Excellencies,
Ambassador Mr. Ali Hussain Didi,

On 21 September 2011, the Government of the Republic of Maldives deposited its instrument of accession to the Rome Statute. After the 2008 peaceful democratic transition in your country, your accession to the Rome Statute is another sign of Maldives' strong support for the protection and promotion of human rights, commitment to the effective international justice system and to the pursuit of international peace and security.

The Rome Statute entered into force for the Maldives just last week, on 1 December 2011, bringing the total number of States Parties to 118. Maldives became the 17th State Party belonging to the Asia-Pacific Group. The number of States Parties from that region is growing and that is extremely encouraging. There is no doubt that the Asia-Pacific region is taking a stand toward increasing its participation within the Rome Statute system. There have also been good news few days ago coming from South Pacific.

However, Asia-Pacific still is the most underrepresented region in the Rome Statute system. It is vital that the momentum towards increasing respect for the rule of law and accountability for those responsible for the most serious crimes is seized by other States in the region. Given the important role of Maldives as current Chair of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), we hope Maldives' accession to the Rome Statute would also be seen as a call to other States in the region to work for a united regional voice that speaks against impunity and for the protection and promotion of human rights.

As His Excellency Dr Mohamed Waheed, Vice-President of the Republic of Maldives underlined in his statement to the General Debate of this year's session of the United Nations General Assembly: *“In our globalized world, those who trample human rights or deny basic freedoms will be held accountable. And I am proud that the Maldives has now taken its rightful place as a defender of international law and human rights.”*

It is therefore a big privilege for me, on behalf of the Assembly of States Parties, to congratulate Maldives once again and to extend to it a warm welcome to the growing ICC family.

The Hague, 6 December 2011