

H.E Ali Hussain Didi, Non-Resident Ambassador of Maldives to the Netherlands,
Welcoming ceremony of the International Criminal Court (ICC)
6 December 2011.

- President of the ICC, Judge Sang-Hyun Song
- Vice-President of the ASP and Ambassador of Mexico, H.E. Mr. Jorge Lomonaco
- Vice Presidents of the ICC, Judges Fatoumata Dembele Diarra and Hans-Peter Kaul
- Prosecutor, Mr. Luis Moreno-Ocampo
- Registrar, Ms. Silvana Arbia

Your Honours, Excellencies and Distinguished Colleagues,

Thank you for your kind invitation to be here today for this historic moment.

As you are aware, the Rome Statute entered into force in the Maldives on 1 December. This is an important moment for the Maldives – which takes a further step in its ongoing efforts to uphold the very highest standards of international law, and for the South Asian region, where the Maldives joins Afghanistan and Bangladesh as members. We look forward to participating with them and all other members during the 10th Assembly of State Parties in New York later this month.

I quote from the first line of the preamble of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

***Conscious** that all peoples are united by common bonds, their cultures pieced Together in a shared heritage, and concerned that this delicate mosaic may be Shattered at any time,*

I stand here today representing the Maldives, a small but crucial piece of that mosaic – crucial because the world will only have peace and justice when all the pieces are fitted together and we work together as one.

The people of the Maldives have demonstrated, time and again over recent years, their inherent belief in justice and human rights. Our recent transition to democracy, including agreement on a new constitution and the convening of our first ever free and fair elections, were secured on a human rights platform. Human rights, rule of law and justice are the bedrock of the new democratic Maldives and this domestic conviction is increasingly translated to the international stage where the Maldives has moved to sign eight of the nine core international human rights conventions, the Geneva Conventions, and, of course, the Rome Convention. We have also played a leading role, as a member of the United Nations and more specifically as a member of the Human Rights Council, in pressing for accountability and an end to impunity in Libya, Syria and elsewhere. Our President, H.E. Mr. Mohamed Nasheed, has been particularly outspoken during this year's historic events in the Middle East and North Africa, calling on leaders to respond to the will of the people or else step down.

The Government's move, on 21st September, to sign the Rome Statute, following the backing of our parliament the previous June, is therefore a natural extension of this strong commitment to human rights, fundamental freedoms and justice. .

Excellencies,

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court. They are the ultimate manifestation of humankind's wish to put aside our differences and to work for the common good. After 2000 years of modern human civilization, we have at last a mechanism for universal justice, a mechanism designed to ensure that every person on the planet, no matter where they live, is equal before the law and is entitled to the same rights and protections.

Too often in the past, human civilization has been scarred by mass murder, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity, and those responsible have been able to hide behind denial and impunity. They were able to do so, largely, because we lived in a world of nation states where sovereignty trumps all and where law can be bent to an individual's will.

However, as we have seen with the Arab Spring, these old certainties no longer hold true. Globalization, the internet and the democratization of information have made national borders look like sieves and State efforts to control information look increasingly forlorn. This means that the world has become witness to the behavior of leaders who try to rule by the bullet. And with information comes accountability and the hope of justice. And it is in this sense that the role of the ICC becomes so important – it represents the promise that someone will be held to account for the crimes we see on our television screens, and the promise the national borders are no longer a safe hiding place.

In closing I quote the last line of the preamble of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

***Resolved** to guarantee lasting respect for and the enforcement of international Justice,*

The Maldives work as a member does not, we know, stop today – rather it starts. We are indeed resolved to play our full part, as a piece of the mosaic of international justice. We are committed to ensuring our own justice system fully complies with our obligations under the Rome Statute, and we are committed to ensuring that, through our participation in the UN and other bodies, we promote the cause of the ICC and of accountability and justice.

That is our promise.

Thank you