**36th Session of the UPR Working Group – Review of Maldives**

**Statement by Austria**

4 November 2020

Madame President,

We welcome the delegation of the Republic of Maldives and thank them for the presentation of their national report.

Allow me up front to underline the important progress made by the Government of H.E Ibrahim Mohamed Solih since November 2018 in the field of human rights, particularly when it comes to the independence of the judicial system, fighting corruption as well as combatting violent religious extremism. We encourage the government to continue implementing its ambitious reform agenda.

The full realization of democratic principles, the rule of law and all human rights is a constant challenge for all states. Therefore, we recommend:

* Ensure that Civil Society Organizations are free to carry out their activities without fear or hindrance, in this regard remove undue restrictions on the freedom of association, in accordance with article 21 and 22 of the ICCPR.
* Withdraw reservations to Article 18 of the ICCPR and cease to restrict the freedom to hold a religion or belief of their choice.
* Provide all young people with comprehensive information on sexual and reproductive health and family planning.
* Strengthen social services, shelters and protection mechanisms for survivors of domestic violence, sexual- and gender-based violence, child abuse and ill-treatment and address harmful narratives that undermine gender equality.