**Universal Periodic Review 36 – The Maldives**

**Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands** **– 4 November 2020**

Madam President,

The Kingdom of the Netherlands thanks the delegation of The Maldives for the presentation of its national report.

The Netherlands commends the Maldives for its recent constitutional reform following the 2018 elections and the ratification of the Gender Equality Act. However, important challenges remain when it comes to gender and sexual based violence, freedom of expression, and freedom of religion or belief.

The Netherlands **recommends** the Maldives to:

1. Adapt Article 9 and 19 of the Constitution so that it protects the right to freedom of religion or belief in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
2. Allocate adequate resources for the effective implementation of the Gender Equality Law, to improve gender sensitivity in the judicial system and to increase the number of female judges in order to provide better justice services to gender-based violence victims.

The Netherlands wishes the Maldives success with the implementation of the recommendations it receives during this third UPR cycle.

Thank you, Madam President.