Statement by:
His Excellency Mr Ahmed Sareer, Permanent Representative to the United Nations
Agenda Item 68: The Right of Peoples to Self-determination
New York, 4 November 2013

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary General for his report on the right of peoples to self-determination. We also wish to express our appreciation to the members of the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, the Human Rights Council and all the special mandate holders for their contributions relating to the rights of peoples to self-determination. The Maldives further welcomes the recent reports of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights that address the issues related to self-determination. We further take note of the final report of the current Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, James Anaya.

Mr. Chairman,

The right to self-determination, as enshrined in the United Nations charter, is an integral element of respect for basic human rights and fundamental freedoms anywhere in the world. It is binding, universally accepted and is a recognized norm of international law. It is only through the realization of this very basic right of people to determine, with no compulsion or coercion, their own future, political status and independence that we can begin to address others such as dignity, justice, progress and equity within a society. Yet, millions of people live in the world today, stripped of the right to determine their own fate, either due to military intervention, aggression, occupation or exploitation by foreign powers. The international community cannot condone the deprivation of this inherent right from any peoples in any region. And thus, concerted international action is needed to alleviate the suffering of those whose right to self-determination has been suppressed.

Mr. Chairman,

The right to self-determination is affirmed by both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Maldives is a party to both these integral Covenants that guarantee for all, the pursuit of development, together with the freedom to determine their political status. The two Covenants also affirm the right of peoples, for their own ends, to freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources and state that no people should be deprived of their own means of subsistence. In this regard, the Maldives deplores the exploitation of people in the name of development, and the use of natural resources in territories traditionally occupied or used by groups, without regard to their
cultural integrity or preservation. While Maldives condemns excessive exploitation of natural resources and the potential for adverse impacts, we also deplore the abuse of peoples without regard to human rights and dignity.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation takes note of the aspects of right of self-determination and the rights of indigenous peoples mentioned in the Secretary-General’s report. It is our hope that issues related to the realization of their rights are appropriately addressed towards resolving them at the earliest. One particular issue that prominently rises above all others is the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The long struggle for self-determination still eludes Palestinians, whose aspirations for an independent Palestinian state lies in vain.

The Maldives also while welcoming the Human Right Council’s resolution earlier this year reaffirming the inalienable, permanent and unqualified right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, takes note with deep concern the deteriorating situation of human rights in Palestine as stated in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Palestine, Richard Falk. The Maldives strongly believes that a two state solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace, with the state of Palestine established on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, is the only way forward. It is the only just way. We therefore call upon United Nations to guarantee the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people.

Mr. Chairman,

The Maldives strongly believes that questions over self-determination can best be addressed through constructive and participatory dialogue between all parties affected. In this regard, the aim of the international community should be to assist in creating and engaging in consultative mechanisms that encourage the exchange of information and incorporation of minorities in the decision making process, especially for those decisions that affect them. As the rights of those who govern can only be derived from the will of the governed, nations have a responsibility to ensure that the governing processes are inclusive and that they adhere to our most basic obligations.

Mr. Chairman,

Perhaps those of us who enjoy our own right to belong, to choose and to decide at our will, may never fully understand the true sentiments of those who are oppressed and living without the freedom to determine their course of action and future at their own will. However, the world must recognize that no one person is less deserving of these rights than the other. It is therefore the Maldives’ sincerest hope that the international community continues to strive to ensure the right to self-determination to be realised by all peoples of the world and continue to work towards alleviating the suffering of those whose right to self-determination has been suppressed, as no one deserves any less.

Thank You.