Thank you Mr Chairman,

At the outset, let me express the appreciation of my delegation to the Secretary General for his reports on crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control, as well as the report of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The Maldives commends the work of the UN bodies and agencies towards preventing transnational crime, strengthening prosecution mechanisms, and countering its effects on the international drug trade.

Located in the crossroads of the Indian Ocean, the Republic of the Maldives is inherently vulnerable to the purveyance of transnational crime. Porous borders keep us susceptible to a flourishing international drug trade, and our reliance on foreign labour brings with it ills such as human trafficking.

Mr Chairman,

The Maldives remains committed to fighting organized crime, both at home and abroad. I am proud to inform this Committee that the Maldives has acceded to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime on the 4th of February this year. At home, we have already begun to follow the spirit of this Convention. Our police service regularly coordinates with INTERPOL and other international authorities on a myriad of issues concerning transnational crime. In the wake of the organized crime circuits which developed on the side-lines of Somali Piracy, Maldives has stepped up its vigilance. Earlier this year, the Government proposed an Anti-Piracy Bill to Parliament, which seeks to establish a legal framework to tackle piracy, while also aiming to outline legal procedures to deal with individuals suspected of committing acts of piracy within the territorial waters of the Maldives. Furthermore, in May of this year, the United Nations Trust Fund for Fight against Piracy approved a $2 million package for affected nations, such as the Maldives.

Though our borders remain porous, with the limited capacity we have, we make every effort to monitor vessels entering and leaving our territory. The Maldives has never cultivated or produced any narcotic or other drug, yet in years past we have seen large quantities of high grade cocaine wash up on our shores – though a supply of it has never been available in the black market. We know our territory has been abused as a transhipment point for illicit trade, though we have worked with our international partners to ensure this abuse is a thing of the past.

In this regard, the Maldives remains grateful for the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Its activities in the region have included drug law enforcement and technical cooperation with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). We are pleased with the 2013-2015 Regional Programme and its maintained focus on key areas of interest and look forward to its implementation. The Maldives would like to
further thank UNODC for its engagement with our Governmental bodies and for the assistance it provided on capacity building. Not only has their efforts contributed towards the effective implementation of further instruments to combat transnational organized crime, it has also assisted the Maldives address victims of the drug trade.

Mr Chairman,

The only way to prevent repetitive cycles of drug abuse and the resulting social ills, is through rehabilitation. Addicts are victims of a trade targeted towards some of the most vulnerable segments of our community. Young children are often recruited, abusing laws protecting minors, and then co-opted into a culture of gangs and violence.

A report, produced last year by the Asia Foundation, noted that gangs were becoming increasingly common in the Maldives and has begun to affect almost all citizens in the capital. It found through its focus groups, that a majority of those met had police records and admitted to either using or selling drugs. The correlations between drug use or sale and gang violence in Maldives is clear, though the problem has been exacerbated by weak democratic institutions and corruption.

Mr Chairman,

In order to sure up our institutional frameworks, we have tirelessly sought to strengthen democratic institutions, even going so far as to create a judicial body dedicated to the drug abuse problem. In 2012, through a Parliamentary bill, the Maldives formed a drug court to deal with more than 300 cases that were pending. More than that, the bill ensured punitive measures gave way to treatment based approaches for minor offenses, using a graduated approach to differentiate between addicts, peddlers, dealers and traffickers. Since the first case was put before the Drug Court in August of last year, numerous addicts have been treated by rehabilitation centres, and those who have completed programs successfully were awarded certificates in testament to their achievement.

Mr Chairman,

Prevention must extend to all institutions, and the biggest institutional threat is undoubtedly corruption. While we are already party to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, the Maldivian Government has initiated a gap analysis of the convention with regards to our domestic legal framework. We hope to have a full implementation strategy of its provisions by next year. In addition to this, the administration has given full support to the constitutionally created, independent Anti-Corruption Commission of the Maldives.

Through addressing corruption, the Maldives also hopes to limit human trafficking. The labour market has created a demand for cheap labour that has led to abuses in local industries as well as unsavoury recruiting practices abroad. While a bill on human trafficking is still pending in Parliament, the Government is exploring other avenues to protect victims. Having already opened a shelter earlier this year, and activated a border control system that will safeguard against those entering the country illegally, the Maldives is well on its way to systematically addressing this issue.

Mr Chairman,

Whether we are discussing drug or human trafficking or other organized transnational crimes, victims are plentiful. Our internationally based solutions must be implemented in tandem with national programs. The human dimension must not be forgotten. The Maldives stands ready to use our meagre means to safeguard against the proliferation of these corrupt practices. And we will continue to work to mend the social damage left in their wake.

Thank you.