Plenary of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly
Agenda Item 119: Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the
Security Council and related matters

Statement by:
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Mr President,

It is an honour for the Maldives to participate in the debate on this important agenda item. The question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council is an important matter that has been a top priority of the Maldivian foreign policy for decades. My delegation welcomes the appointment of His Excellency Courtenay Rattray as the new co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform. We look forward to seeing real progress on these negotiations in the lead up to the 70th anniversary of the United Nations next year.

The question of Security Council reform is one that has gone unanswered for too long. At its core, the United Nations embodies the ideal that all States are equal. We are equally responsible for maintaining international order, progressing global development, and advancing the just causes of all peoples. The Security Council regrettably has not mirrored these principles. 69 years ago, the United Nations was created by 51 countries in a world plagued by destitution, colonial oppression, and the aftermath of global war. Today, though the world around us has changed dramatically, and though the membership of the UN has expanded to 193 Member States, the Security Council has only been reformed once since the founding of this United Nations,

Mr. President,

When the Security Council was reformed 50 years ago, it expanded the Council through creating four new non-permanent seats. This expansion did not compromise the efficiency of the Security Council, nor did it make the organ less effective. Instead it only became more representative and more legitimate. In today’s world order, legitimacy is no longer derived from the will of the few, but in that of the overwhelming majority.

If the Security Council is to maintain its legitimacy as an organ of this United Nations, bestowed with the authority to make vital decisions on behalf of the entire international community on matters of peace and security, it must be open to change. There were calls for reform even before the Council held its first meeting; these calls have been repeated consistently over the decades, although little progress has been made. The greatest impediment to progress has not been the apparent lack of consensus, but rather the lack of a fair and proper process to establish reform. In that light, we once again welcome the establishment of an Advisory Group on Security Council reform, but regret that there has been no real movement since its ‘Non-Paper’ was published in December last year. We
hope that the Advisory Group will make progress over the course of the year, offering constructive proposals for establishing a streamlined reform process.

Mr. President,

The membership of the Security Council is an increasingly flawed reflection of the world today. Half of the UN membership are small states; yet the vast majority of small states have never been elected. Small island developing states (SIDS) represent one fifth of the UN membership; yet 78% of SIDS have never gained a seat on the Security Council. We can begin to correct this flawed picture with one simple step: establishing a SIDS-specific seat on the Council.

SIDS are an established, cohesive group that share unique challenges - we are nations that are small in size, isolated, and particularly vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change. Climate change is fundamentally an issue of international security and stability that the Security Council must confront. The Maldives has raised this issue during the “Arria formula” meeting of the Security Council on the subject of the “Security dimensions of climate change” in 2013. The Maldives has great expectations for a day when the Security Council will formally address the long-term security threat that affects low-lying states such as ours and many others that are vulnerable to impacts of climate change. This day may not come soon enough unless the Security Council has equitable representation, inclusive of those states most affected by climate change - particularly SIDS.

Mr President,

The designation of a SIDS-specific seat is based on the principled position of the Maldives; that an expanded membership should reflect the true nature of the United Nations. Because the Security Council lacks diverse perspectives, it is unable to meet the diverse needs of the international community, especially in the developing world.

A change in membership is not possible without addressing the prohibitive cost of running a campaign, which deters or prevents smaller states from securing a seat on the Council. Security Council seats must not be a prize won by the highest bidder. Instead, States must be elected on principles of equality and representation. All UN Members must be able to compete on an equal footing; have an equal chance.

The current constitution of the Security Council reinforces the concentration of military power in the hands of a few. We call on all permanent members to rise above their national interests and act, as Article 24 of the Charter duty requires, on behalf of the interests of all the Member States of this United Nations. We urge the permanent members not to resist the call for urgent reform, and help to bring this vital organ of the UN into the 21st century.

The Maldives maintains that the Security Council, both in its present form and its final manifestation through the reform process, must become more accountable, coherent and transparent. It is imperative that the functioning and working methods of the Council are revised to ensure greater efficiency and inclusiveness. As a member of the cross-regional group ACT, the Maldives calls upon the Council to fulfil its responsibilities under the UN Charter by genuinely representing the will and interests of the larger membership.

Mr President,

The vast majority of States have spoken: the Security Council is in urgent need of reform. No small island developing state should be held back from its rightful place in the world order, for global security affects the small with greatest measure. Nations should not be judged on the size of their populations, nor on the might of their armies; but on the strength of their resolve to further peace and security for all.

Thank you.