

Agenda item 3: Strategies for strengthening regional cooperation on social protection in Asia and the Pacific.

Honorable Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

We are honored to be here today, to be a part of this discussion on strengthening regional cooperation on social protection and moving towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Maldives is committed to the 2030 Agenda, and recognizes the importance of the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific that was endorsed by this Committee on its sixth session.

The Covid-19 pandemic and recent geopolitical instabilities have underscored the importance of having universal, comprehensive, sustainable and shock responsive social protection systems in place to ensure protection to everyone, especially to the poor and vulnerable.

Recognizing the challenges and weakness in our current social protection system, gaps and inconsistencies in the existing legislation and portfolio of social protection programmes, as well as the desire to develop a well-coordinated and harmonized social protection system for the future, the Maldives has embarked on the development of a National framework for Social Protection for the country.

This Framework is part of the Government's Strategic Action Plan 2019-2023, and will provide the longer-term vision for social protection in Maldives and guide the future development of social protection in the country, ensuring a coordinated and strategic approach by all stakeholders. The Framework aligns with many of the actions in the Action Plan and will aid the establishment of a social protection floor to protect against vulnerabilities across the lifecycle. The implementation of the Framework will enable the required institutional and legislative reforms and development, including amendments to the Social Protection Act which will aid towards realization of this Action Plan.

To extend the protection to the working age group, the Maldives is currently working on enhancing the resilience and employability of the Maldivian workers by establishing a sustainably financed unemployment insurance scheme and integrated labor market services. Efforts are also ongoing to enhance and strengthen the existing universal healthcare financing scheme and pension schemes, as well as to establish the first national digital registry for Persons with Disabilities.

As a small island state the challenges we face are numerous and require the support and assistance of development partners to ensure no one is left behind. Hence, the importance of regional cooperation cannot be overestimated.

We express our sincere thanks to ESCAP for leading this initiative and reaffirm our commitment to achieve the goals set forth in the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific and to work together at the regional and country levels cooperation in support of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

Thank you