



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

MINISTRY OF FISHERIES AND OCEAN RESOURCES

MINISTER' SPEECH - 2024 Global Ocean Development Forum

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Theme: Let's Sea our Future – Promoting Blue partnership for Growth and Sustainability

Excellencies from Shandong Provincial Government, Ministry of Natural Resources, Representatives from the Qindao Municipal Peoples Government, Representatives from Oceanic Administration of Shandong Province, Representative from the United Nations, International Maritime Organizations and Experts, scholars, entrepreneurs and industry leaders in marine sector

Ladies and gentlemen, A very good morning.

I am humbled by the opportunity to address this important gathering today. I extend my gratitude to the organizers for this opportunity for me to share our insights and engage in this gathering on behalf of the Maldivian Government.

Maldives is a Small Island Developing State - one of the most vulnerable countries in the world. Our identity, economic vitality, and prosperity are deeply tied to the oceans surrounding our islands. The vibrant coral reefs and the rich marine ecosystems found in our waters are the only source of income and livelihood and are deeply connected to our lives and wellbeing. Our unique geography has shaped the cultural identity and economic activities of the Maldivian people, where the population almost entirely depends on coastal and marine resources and services obtained from them.

The oceans, as you know, play an essential role in regulating the global climate. The UN Ocean Decade calls for global action, urging nations to come together to reverse the decline of ocean health and ensure the sustainable use of its resources. For us in the Maldives, this is not just a goal, but a necessity. Our fisheries, particularly the pole-and-line method of tuna fishing, have long been recognized as one of the most sustainable in the world. This traditional practice not only reflects our deep respect for the ocean but also our commitment to responsible stewardship. I remember the quote by His Excellency President Xi Jinping, who had very wisely advised to live with the ocean. This resonates very closely with us - as you can tell, our entire population lives by the ocean. From the food on our plate and from our surroundings, you can tell that we live from what we take from the ocean, and so of course we truly believe we have to live with the ocean.



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However, as the demands on marine resources grow, the challenges we face in maintaining sustainability also increase. The UN Ocean Decade offers us an unprecedented opportunity to make use of global scientific knowledge and innovation, ensuring that our fisheries can thrive in a changing world. The Maldives is already taking proactive steps, through initiatives to decarbonize our fisheries sector and introduce advanced technologies in fishing vessels. We are committed to source at least 35% of the electricity used in the processing sector from renewable sources of energy by the end of 2027. These initiatives align closely with the goals of the Ocean Decade, where we aim to not only improve the quality and efficiency of our fisheries but also reduce its carbon footprint and protect the very ecosystems that sustain them.

As we gather here today, our oceans around the world face unprecedented challenges. These issues not only threaten marine biodiversity but also jeopardize the livelihoods of millions who depend on the ocean's resources. Maldives is subject to high projected local extinction of marine species by the end of this century due to climate change, posing significant risks to our fisheries and communities that depend on marine resources. Healthy oceans are vital for sustainable development, climate regulation, and food security. It is our responsibility to act and ensure that future generations inherit a thriving marine environment.

The Maldives is extremely concerned about the decline in the health and resilience of the global marine ecosystems. Overfishing, dangerous fishing practices and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU), pollution, and other stressors constitute a massive threat to the productivity of the ocean and its resources. As a country heavily reliant on fisheries for food security, we remain committed to banning harmful fishing methods and promoting sustainable practices, as enshrined in the Fisheries Act of the Maldives.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

The challenges we face today is not local, it transcends national borders, necessitating robust partnerships across nations and regions. Therefore, it is our interest to work collaboratively to harness the ocean's resources responsibly, ensuring a balance that supports both ecosystems and communities. The power of collaboration is evident in many successful initiatives and we must take examples from them.

In the Maldives, we are proud to stand alongside our fellow SIDS in tackling one of the most pressing global challenges - marine plastic litter. We have committed to phasing out single-use plastics by 2030, a bold national target that reflects our deep commitment to protecting our oceans. This aligns with the vision outlined in the AOSIS Leaders' Declaration, where we call on the international community to work towards finalizing a legally binding instrument on plastic



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pollution, including pollution in the marine environment. It is vital that this agreement is not only finalized but also effectively implemented to address this urgent issue.

Each of us has a role to play in this collective endeavour. Governments must enact policies that prioritize sustainable practices and I am proud to say that the Maldives is committed to being at the forefront of these initiatives. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have an equally important role. Your voices are powerful tools for advocacy, raising awareness, and driving the change we need. Local communities can share traditional knowledge, while the private sector can invest in sustainable marine technologies. Together, we can form a unified front in the fight for our oceans.

I strongly believe that innovation plays a crucial role in effective ocean and fisheries management. From deploying technology to monitor fishing activities to implementing data-driven strategies, we have numerous examples of effective practices that reinforce our commitment to sustainability. Let us continue to learn from one another, integrating traditional knowledge with scientific expertise to enhance our management practices.

During H.E. President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu's state visit to China from 7 to 13th January, this year, we signed two significant MOUs aimed at strengthening scientific research, ocean observation, and diversifying our fisheries and ocean resources sector. Following the successful discussions between H.E. President Xi Jinping and H.E. President Dr Mohamed Muizzu, private sector, research and development as well as training institutes and Chinese Government agencies have shown strong interest to work together and some have visited the Maldives.

I strongly believe this marks the beginning of a fruitful partnership which is beneficial for both our nations. There are several key areas where I see tremendous potential for collaboration to modernize and transform our fisheries sector. We welcome investments in aquaculture development to make it an economically viable industry in the Maldives. We also welcome investments in our processing sector to expand our storage and processing capacity. We are also keen to work in the research and development and capacity building to strengthen the fisheries sector.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, I urge each one of you to take action and we will do so! Whether it's supporting sustainable fishing initiatives, advocating for sound policies that ensure the responsible use of our ocean resources, or collaborating to improve our fisheries management strategies, your efforts matter. Together, we can create a resilient marine environment that benefits all. Let us embrace this journey with hope and determination, for the future of our oceans depends on our



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collective action today.

Thank you.