



MALDIVES



Statement by:

His Excellency Mr Ahmed Sareer, Permanent Representative to the United Nations

*Statement on Agenda Item 90: Implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace
New York, 30 October 2013*

Mr Chairman,

The Maldives has always shown its unequivocal support for disarmament initiatives, including regional disarmament. We support the creation of nuclear weapon free zones, especially in volatile regions such as the Middle East. In this regard we welcome the Security Council Resolution 2118 of 27 September 2013, on the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria, and its continuing, timely implementation on the ground by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Mr Chairman,

The Maldives has supported the establishment of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, since the decision was made in 1971. It has been forty-two years since the General Assembly declared the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. Since the adoption of the declaration, the cold war power dynamics and context of issues prevalent in the region has changed significantly. However, there is also a rise in new challenges and new dynamics yielding new threats to security that re-emphasize the importance of the Declaration's goals. We thus, reiterate our support to the goal of ensuring conditions for peace, security, and stability in the Indian Ocean region and to the full realisation of these goals in line with the emerging security challenges and threats within the region.

Among the new important challenges that the states of the Indian Ocean share today is piracy, as is highlighted in the report of the 455th meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean. As the smallest state in the region, the Maldives is susceptible to any instability in the region and therefore, the increasing incidences of piracy in the Indian Ocean are a major concern. The Maldives relies heavily on tourism and fisheries as a major

source of income and these incidences of piracy alerts us to the potential threat to our country and economy. We therefore reiterate our thanks for the United Nations Trust Fund's approval of a 2 million dollar package of projects in support of anti-piracy efforts in Somalia and other affected States in the region, including the Maldives. We would also like to highlight the commitment of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation towards combating piracy.

The use of the Indian Ocean for illegally transporting weapons by terrorists and militant groups and the conduct of acts of terror, drug trafficking, and other transnational organized crimes and illegal fishing are also major concerns for my country. In 2007, the Maldives National Defence Force in Maldivian waters intercepted and captured a vessel full of weapons and ammunition. Incidents such as this further point to the urgent need for recognition of maritime dimensions of the security. Furthermore, in recent years, transnational criminal organisations and groups have used Maldivian territorial waters for drug trafficking.

As also stated in the Ad hoc committee's report, sea temperatures in the Indian Ocean are rising faster than anywhere else in the world. And the effects of climate change and especially sea levels threaten the very existence of the low-lying communities. For a nation where 80% of territory is barely one and a half meters above sea level, this is the ultimate security threat, the very question of our survival.

Mr Chairman,

We believe there is significant need for countries of the Indian Ocean to unify on a single platform to work towards an integrated approach to address these challenges. The Maldives is actively engaged in various international forums to enhance its role in the global maritime arena. Maldives was one of the first nations to sign the Djibouti Code of Conduct to repress piracy and armed robbery in the Western Indian Ocean. We are also a member of the India Ocean Naval Symposium, which includes the promotion and understanding of mutual maritime issues among the littoral States of the Indian Ocean, and the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia.

It is our hope that through the step-by-step co-operation between the countries of the Indian Ocean and the other concerned powers we will be able to find practical ways of fulfilling the aspiration of our peoples towards the Indian Ocean as a zone of Peace and shared prosperity. Thank you.