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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AT GENEVA

Fortieth Session of the Human Rights Council
Item 10 – GD
Joint Statement on behalf of the HRC Membership Contact Group
21 March 2019

Statement by:

H.E Hala Hameed, Permanent Representative of the Maldives to the UN Offices in Geneva

Excellency,

I am pleased to deliver the following statement on behalf of a new group of friends: the contact group on Council membership. The full list of the members will be uploaded to Extranet.

The Human Rights Council is only as good as its members. Members of the UN’s principal body for promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights have a particular responsibility to uphold and defend those rights.

As GA resolution 60/251 that established this Council makes clear, all States must respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, and members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights and fully cooperate with the Council.

Mr President,

We also believe that the Council’s membership should reflect the diversity of the UN as a whole, and that all countries, irrespective of their size, wealth or power should have an equal opportunity to serve.



It is therefore a cause for some concern that, as of today, 79 UN Member States have yet to hold a seat on the Council. Many of those have never stood for election, and most are Small States, especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

To improve this situation, cooperatively and cross-regionally, an initial group of 14 States came together late last year to form a new contact group on membership.

The new group will endeavour to strengthen universality, inclusivity and diversity at the Council by encouraging States with a demonstrable commitment to human rights and democracy, especially Small States, to strengthen their participation and engagement with the body and its mechanisms and, eventually, to consider standing for election.

The Group will also seek to strengthen the process of Council elections by supporting measures to enhance transparency, public accountability and meritocracy.

Mr President,

We believe there is cause for optimism. Just 2 years ago, the number of States that had never held a seat on the Council stood at 95 – compared to 79 today. In the meantime a number of Small States have stood for and been elected to the Council. We congratulate them and encourage others to follow suit. Small States often offer new perspectives and they strengthen the Council's universality.

We will therefore be building from a positive base; and invite others who support the aforementioned principles and goals to join us.

Thank you.



List of Countries of HRC Membership Contact Group

Australia

Bahamas

Denmark

Fiji

Iceland

Maldives

Mexico

Netherlands

New Zealand

Norway

Seychelles

Switzerland

United Kingdom

Uruguay