

Joint Statement on the occasion of State Visit of the President of the Republic of Maldives to India (December 17, 2018)

1. The President of the Republic of Maldives, H.E. Mr Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, is on a State Visit to India from 16-18 December 2018 at the invitation of the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, H.E. Mr Narendra Modi.

2. This is President Solih's first visit abroad after assuming the office of President of the Republic of Maldives on 17 November 2018. The President of Maldives is accompanied by his wife First Lady Fazna Ahmed and a high level delegation comprising of Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulla Shahid, Minister of Finance Ibrahim Ameer, Minister of National Planning and Infrastructure Mohamed Aslam, Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation Aishath Nahula, Minister of Economic Development Uz Fayyaz Ismail, senior government officials, and a business delegation.

3. In an important gesture, President Solih is staying in the Rashtrapati Bhawan as a special guest of Rashtrapatiji. This demonstrates the close ties between India and the Maldives, and the warmth and mutual respect between the two governments.

4. The President of India met the President of Maldives on 17 December 2018, and hosted a banquet in honour of President Solih later the same evening. Vice President of India Shri Venkaiah Naidu, and External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj called on the President of Maldives.

5. Prime Minister of India and President of Maldives held Official talks on 17 December 2018 in an extremely warm, cordial and friendly atmosphere reflective of the special relationship between the two countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also hosted an official lunch for President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih and the accompanying delegation.

6. The two sides signed the following Agreements/MoUs/Joint Declaration of Intent during the visit:

- Agreement on the Facilitation of Visa Arrangements
- Memorandum of Understanding on Cultural Cooperation
- Memorandum of Understanding for Establishing Mutual Cooperation to Improve the Ecosystem for Agribusiness;
- Joint Declaration of Intent on Cooperation in the field of Information & Communications Technology and Electronics.

They agreed to work together to create institutional linkages and to establish a framework of cooperation in the following areas:

- Health cooperation issues particularly cancer treatment
- Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal Matters
- Investment promotion
- Human Resource Development
- Tourism

7. Prime Minister Modi warmly recalled his recent visit to the Maldives to attend the swearing-in ceremony of President Solih as his special guest. He reiterated the highest importance that India attaches to its relationship with the Maldives.

8. The two leaders reiterated their strong commitment to further strengthening and reinvigorating the traditionally strong and friendly relations between India and the Maldives, nurtured by geographical contiguity, ethnic, historical, socio-economic and cultural ties between the peoples of the two countries. They also reiterated an abiding faith in, and commitment to democracy, development and peaceful co-existence.

9. The Prime Minister of India congratulated the people of Maldives for their successful and peaceful transition to democracy. He applauded the President of Maldives on his vision for inclusive, decentralised, people-centric governance, and development that is sustainable. Recalling his government's policy of 'Neighbourhood-First', Prime Minister Modi reiterated India's assurance of all possible support to Maldives in realising its aspirations for socio-economic development, and strengthening of democratic and independent institutions.

10. In this regard, the Prime Minister announced provision of financial assistance up to US\$ 1.4 billion in the form of budgetary support, currency swap and concessional lines of credit to fulfil the socio-economic development programmes of the Maldives.

11. President Solih reaffirmed his government's "India-First Policy", and commitment to working together closely with India. He appreciated the generous assistance provided by the Government of India to Maldives, and identified various areas for developmental cooperation, including private sector involvement in development of housing and infrastructure, water and sewerage systems in the outlying islands, healthcare, education and tourism.

12. Both leaders emphasized the need to improve connectivity between the two countries

through the establishment of enabling infrastructure that would promote the exchange of goods and services, information, ideas, culture and people.

13. The Prime Minister informed the decision by the Government of India to provide 1000 additional slots over next 5 years for training and capacity building in diverse fields including judicial, policing and law-enforcement, audit and financial management, local governance, community development, IT, e-governance, sports, media, youth and women empowerment, leadership, innovation & entrepreneurship, art & culture.

14. Recognizing the importance of facilitating people-to-people exchanges and travel, the leaders welcomed the new Agreement on Visa Facilitation signed today. The Prime Minister noted that the new Agreement will address the common concerns and ensure that people-to-people contacts are enhanced. The Maldives is one of the very few countries with which India has a visa free arrangement.

15. President Solih expressed his happiness at the signing of the Agreement, as this will facilitate many Maldivians who send their children to school in India, to be able to accompany them. The Agreement will also facilitate easier visa arrangements for Maldivian citizens and their families, to come to India for medical treatment. Both leaders emphasised the need to ensure seamless movement of people between both countries.

16. Both leaders agreed on the importance of maintaining peace and security in the Indian Ocean Region. In furtherance of the shared recognition that the security interests of both the countries are interlinked in the region, they reiterated their assurance of being mindful of each other's concerns and aspirations for the stability of the region and not allowing their respective territories to be used for any activity inimical to the other. The two leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation to enhance maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region through coordinated patrolling and aerial surveillance, exchange of information and capacity building.

17. The two leaders reaffirmed their unwavering commitment and support for increased cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations both within the region and elsewhere. Both sides agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation on issues of common concern, including piracy, terrorism, organised crime, drugs and human trafficking. It was also agreed to intensify cooperation in the areas of training and capacity building of Maldives Police Service and Maldives National Defence Force.

18. Both leaders reviewed efforts to promote bilateral trade and investment ties between the two countries. The Prime Minister of India welcomed the expanding opportunities for Indian

companies to invest in the Maldives in different sectors for the mutual benefit of both countries. The Prime Minister noted that the vision of the government of Maldives, of a transparent, accountable, and rule-based administration sends a welcome message to regain the confidence of Indian business persons. Both leaders agreed to promote closer economic cooperation in sectors such as fisheries development, tourism, transportation, connectivity, health, education, information technology, new and renewable energy and communications.

19. Both leaders reiterated the importance of an effective multilateral system as a key factor in tackling global challenges. In this context, they also recognized the need to pursue reform of the main UN bodies, including the revitalization of the UN General Assembly and expansion of the UN Security Council.

20. The President of Maldives reiterated his country's support for India's candidature for permanent membership of an expanded and reformed UN Security Council. Maldives also reiterated support for India's candidature for non-permanent seat for the year 2020-21.

21. The Prime Minister of India welcomed Maldives' decision to re-join the Commonwealth. The Prime Minister also welcomed Maldives as the newest member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

22. Both leaders agreed on the importance of combatting the impacts of climate change, especially detrimental to developing countries, and Small Island Developing States, and the need to work towards strengthening the global response to climate change, through the UNFCCC, and the Paris Agreement.

23. The two leaders underscored the need for strengthening and reform of multilateral financial institutions and enhancing the voice and participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making.

24. The President of Maldives thanked the Prime Minister of India for the warmth, cordiality and gracious hospitality extended to him and members of his delegation during their visit.

25. The President of Maldives invited the President of India to make a State Visit to the Maldives. The President of Maldives also invited the Prime Minister of India to undertake a State Visit to the Maldives, which he accepted.

New Delhi

December 17, 2018