



Statement by

**HIS EXCELLENCY MR. MAUMOON ABDUL GAYOOM**

President of the Republic of Maldives

at the

**Second South Summit**

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

*Your Highness, Your Majesties, Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

Allow me to join previous speakers in congratulating Your Highness on your election to preside over the Second South Summit. I would also like to thank you for the excellent arrangements made for our comfort and for the generous hospitality extended to us.

The hosting of this Summit by Qatar is indeed symbolic of the prominence that the country is gaining amongst developing countries.

I congratulate Your Highness on the remarkable social and economic progress achieved by Qatar under your dynamic leadership.

*Your Highness:*

Five years ago, at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, I shared the euphoria over the articulation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In a few months time we shall review progress and renew commitments.

There will be little to rejoice.

Although there have been few areas of improvement, in too many countries, conditions have actually worsened.

Conflicts, diseases and disasters have impeded progress and imposed enormous suffering.

The Indian Ocean tsunami was a horror that will remain etched in the memories of millions forever. In the Maldives, the tsunami destroyed over 60 percent of the GDP. Economic growth this year will now decline to 1 percent from a 20-year average of 8 percent. High oil prices and the slow return of tourists are creating enormous economic pressures.

For the first time ever, the Maldives will require budgetary support, and will face a serious balance of payments crisis.

The pledges made so far leave a financing gap of nearly 114 million dollars, with major shortfalls in health-related areas such as water and sanitation.

*Your Highness:*

Just six days before the tsunami struck, the UN had voted to graduate the Maldives from the list of least developed countries. The decision was based on the sustained social and economic progress of the past 20 years. We were also



making steady progress towards attaining most of the MDGs.

We thank the support extended by the Group of 77 and China in highlighting the importance of a smooth transition for the Maldives from LDC status. We seek continued support of the Group to our cause, and hope that the Group will back our request to suspend the application of the graduation process until our economy recovers to pre-tsunami levels.

Recovery is now our primary focus.

The people are determined not to fail in this endeavour. As a mark of this, despite the

devastation caused by the tsunami, we have continued to press forward with our efforts to build a politically plural society.

In fact, we have accelerated these efforts, to ensure that what we rebuild is a society that is better than what we have ever had in the Maldives. We need hope, and we need help.

*Your Highness:*

Globalisation offers not only opportunities but poses numerous challenges to small states.

The United Nations and international financial institutions must remain responsive



to the predicament of small states as a result of increased globalization.

Part of humanity cannot sustain prosperity while another is mired in poverty.

The Doha Round must be completed by 2006, and the goals of the Doha Development Agenda must be fully realized.

Of particular importance is increased access to markets for developing countries.

Eradication of poverty must remain an important objective of the global development agenda. Not only trade, but aid too will

continue to play a crucial role in eradicating poverty and deprivation.

It will be important to reaffirm the realization of the ODA target of 0.7 percent of GNP for donors.

*Your Highness:*

The health of the global environment has a far-reaching impact on the quality of life of the people, the safety of communities, and the viability of livelihoods of millions.

The Kyoto Protocol must be made a success, and followed up with meaningful measures to protect the planet.

It is extremely disappointing that the problems of Small Island Developing Countries continue to attract a lot more rhetoric than effective assistance. Like the Barbados Programme of Action, the opportunity to implement the Mauritius Strategy may be slipping.

The UN reform efforts must result in the creation of an effective organization that mirrors current realities, upholds multilateralism, protects human rights, and facilitates equitable development.

*Your Highness, Your Majesties, Your Excellencies:*

What this group is about is no longer about the strength of numbers, but the weight of principle and the power of conscience. We are not here to bargain for what is in our interest alone, but to advocate what is in the common interest of all.

What we seek is not a triumph at the expense of others, but a success that all can share.

In short, what we seek is a world that is better for all of humanity.

Thank you.