

**ADVANCE UNEDITED VERSION**

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**Committee on the Rights of the Child****Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Maldives\*****I. Introduction**

1. The Committee considered the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Maldives<sup>1</sup> at its 2908th and 2909th meetings,<sup>2</sup> held on 12 and 13 January 2026, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 2936th meeting, held on 30 January 2026.

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the State party, and the written replies to the list of issues,<sup>3</sup> which allowed for a better understanding of the situation of children's rights in the State party. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the constructive dialogue held with the high-level and multisectoral delegation of the State party.

**II. Follow-up measures taken and progress achieved by the State party**

3. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved by the State party in various areas, particularly the acceptance of the procedure under Article 13 of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure in 2019, the adoption of the Child Rights Protection Act (Law no. 19/2019), the Juvenile Justice Act (Law no. 18/2019) and regulations aimed at reinforcing the legislation, such as the General Regulation on Child Rights Protection (2020), national programmes *Ijthimaaee Badhahi Madhahuverin* (IBAMA) and *Haalu Kihineh* and the Juvenile Justice Act Implementation Roadmap 2024-2027.

**IV. Main areas of concern and recommendations**

4. The Committee reminds the State party of the indivisibility and interdependence of all the rights enshrined in the Convention and emphasizes the importance of all the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations. The Committee would like to draw the State party's attention to the recommendations concerning the following areas, in respect of which urgent measures must be taken: non-discrimination (para. 17), birth registration and nationality (para. 21), abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation (para. 25), mental and adolescent health (para. 37), and administration of child justice (para. 49).

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\* Adopted by the Committee at its one-hundredth session (12 – 30 January 2026).

<sup>1</sup> CRC/C/MDV/6-7.

<sup>2</sup> See CRC/C/SR.2908 and 2909.

<sup>3</sup> CRC/C/MDV/RQ/6-7.

5. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the realization of children's rights in accordance with the Convention and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography throughout the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It urges the State party to ensure the meaningful participation of children in the design and implementation of policies and programmes aimed at achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals as far as they concern children.

## **A. General measures of implementation (arts. 1, 4, 42 and 44 (6))**

### **Reservations**

6. The Committee, in line with its previous recommendations,<sup>4</sup> encourages the State party to consider withdrawing its reservations regarding article 14 (1) and 21 of the Convention.

### **Legislation**

7. The Committee notes that the State Party has initiated a review of the Child Rights Protection Act and recommends that it fully align the Act and all related legislation with the Convention and its Optional Protocols, particularly with regard to discrepancies in child justice, family law and labour regulations.

### **Comprehensive policy and strategy**

8. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Develop a comprehensive policy on children that encompasses all areas covered by the Convention and, on the basis of the policy, develop a strategy with the necessary elements for its application, which is supported by sufficient human, technical and financial resources;

(b) Take measures to guarantee children's consultations in the developing of the National Development Plan and ensure that it is aligned with the Convention and the Optional Protocols.

### **Coordination**

9. The Committee recommends the State party ensure that all official agencies in charge of protecting child rights work in a coordinated manner and are provided with the necessary human, technical and financial resources for their effective operation.

### **Allocation of resources**

10. Recalling its general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, the Committee notes the increased allocation for the social sector and the adoption of a Program Performance-Based Budgeting and recommends that the State party:

(a) Utilize an efficient and coordinated child-rights-based approach in the elaboration of the State budget, by implementing a tracking system for the allocation and the use of resources for children throughout the budget;

(b) Use this tracking system for impact assessments on how investments in any sector may serve the best interests of the child, ensuring that the different impact of such investment on children is measured.

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<sup>4</sup> CRC/C/MDV/CO3, para 10; CRC/C/MDV/CO/4-5, para.7

### Data collection

11. The Committee notes the progress in aligning different data collection mechanisms. Recalling its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Continue revising its data collection and data-sharing guidelines aiming to improve the methods, strengthen confidentiality and ensure national coverage and disaggregated recollection to reduce fragmentation of data;
- (b) Ensure that statistical data and indicators on children's rights are shared among the relevant ministries and used for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects for the effective implementation of the Convention.

### Access to justice and remedy

12. The Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Ensure that all children have access to: (i) confidential, child-friendly and independent complaint mechanisms in schools, foster care systems, alternative care settings and places of detention for reporting all forms of violence, abuse, discrimination and other violations of their rights; and (ii) legal support and age-appropriate information on access to counselling and remedies, including compensation and rehabilitation;
- (b) Raise awareness among children of their right to file a complaint under existing mechanisms;
- (c) Ensure systematic and mandatory training for all relevant professionals working with children on children's rights and the Convention, and child-friendly procedures and remedies.

### Independent monitoring

13. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the Children's Ombudsperson and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Improve funding and expertise of the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives so as to ensure its full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and for their work on children's rights;
- (b) Strengthen the Children's Ombudsperson's Office;
- (c) Seek technical cooperation from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), among other entities.

### Dissemination of the Convention and awareness-raising

14. The Committee recalls its previous concluding observations<sup>5</sup> and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Promote the active involvement of children in public outreach activities, including in measures targeting parents and caregivers, social workers, teachers and law enforcement officials, and encourage the media to ensure sensitivity to children's rights;
- (b) Raise awareness of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on a communications procedure and provide capacity-building activities aimed at training relevant actors, including children, on the Optional Protocol.

<sup>5</sup> CRC/C/MDV/CO/4-5

### **Children's rights and the business sector**

15. Recalling its general comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Undertake awareness-raising campaigns with the tourism industry and the public at large on the prevention of sexual exploitation of children in the context of travel and tourism and widely disseminate the World Tourism Organization global code of ethics for tourism among travel agents and in the tourism industry;

(b) Strengthen its international cooperation against sexual exploitation of children in the context of travel and tourism through multilateral, regional and bilateral arrangements for its prevention and elimination.

## **B. General principles (arts. 2–3, 6 and 12)**

### **Non-discrimination**

16. The Committee notes the adoption of the Gender Equality Action Plan (2022-2026) and protection against discrimination afforded by the Child Rights Protection Act. It however remains concerned about discrimination against girls, children with disabilities, children of unmarried parents, children of non-Muslim parents, children in State care, discrimination based on religion and gender orientation and discrimination of children with regard to access to services, particularly children with disabilities and children in outer islands.

17. The Committee recalls its previous concluding observations<sup>6</sup> and recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen implementation of the existing legislation, policies, strategies and action plans related to non-discrimination of children; and take further measures to remove religious discrimination from nationality legislation;

(b) Increase its efforts to end discrimination against children in disadvantaged situations, including girls, children with disabilities, children of unmarried parents, children of non-Muslim parents, children in State care, discrimination based on gender orientation and discrimination of children in outer islands;

(c) Conduct media campaigns to change social norms and behaviours that contribute to discrimination; raise public awareness regarding the prohibition of discrimination; and promote tolerance and respect for diversity.

### **Best interests of the child**

18. Recalling its general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observation<sup>7</sup> and recommends that the State party ensure that the right of children to have their best interests taken as a primary consideration is appropriately integrated and consistently interpreted and applied in all legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings and decisions as well as in all policies, programmes and projects that are relevant to, and have an impact on children; and ensure that cultural interpretations and practices comply with the Convention and its Optional Protocols when their best interests are invoked.

### **Respect for the views of the child**

19. Recalling its general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, the Committee recommends that the State party promote meaningful and empowered participation of all children within the family, communities and schools and include

<sup>6</sup> CRC/C/MDV/CO/4-5, para. 27

<sup>7</sup> CRC/C/MDV/CO/4-5, para. 29

children in decision-making in all matters related to them, including environmental matters.

### **C. Civil and political rights (arts. 7–8 and 13–17)**

#### **Birth registration and nationality**

20. The Committee notes the enactment of the Act Number 23/2022 (Birth and Death Registration Act). It remains seriously concerned about:

- (a) Delays in birth registration and obstacles in obtaining birth certification and national identification cards for children;
- (b) Statelessness of children, particularly when a child is born abroad or to a foreign mother.

21. Taking note of target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee urges the State party to:

- (a) Remove existing barriers to birth registration, including by ensuring that all children are able to have their birth registered regardless of the citizenship or marriage status of the parents and by amending the Birth and Death Registration Act to remove fines for late birth registration;
- (b) Ensure that children born to foreign mothers and Maldivian fathers, children of unmarried parents and children born to interfaith marriages can easily have paternity attributed and access their right to citizenship under Article 9(a) of the Constitution;
- (c) Amend Article 54 of the Family Act and the Regulations made thereunder to ensure that women and children are able to apply to the Court to confirm the paternity of the child;
- (d) Provide access to citizenship for children born stateless on the territory of the Maldives, for foundlings and for children in institutional care whose parents are unknown;
- (e) Consider ratifying the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons of 1954 and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness of 1961;
- (f) Seek technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) among others, for the implementation of these recommendations.

#### **Freedom of thought, conscience and religion**

22. The Committee recalls its previous concluding observations and recommends that the State party respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion by taking effective measures, including legislative measures, to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief. It also recommends promoting religious tolerance and dialogue in society, including through facilitating an open public debate on religious issues.

#### **Access to appropriate information**

23. The Committee welcomes the State Party's efforts to address children's digital literacy and to raise awareness on online child safety and sensitization. Recalling its general comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment and the 2026 Joint Statement on Artificial Intelligence and the Rights of the Child, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Continue to enhance the digital literacy and skills of children, teachers and families, and protect children from information and material harmful to their well-being, including in the context of Artificial Intelligence;

(b) Ensure the availability of and access to adequate and age-appropriate information on matters related to children's rights and the environment;

(c) Promote the integration of information related to environmental and social determinants of children's health and development throughout time, while ensuring data protection.

**D. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 35, 37 (a), and 39 of the Convention and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography)**

**Abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation**

24. The Committee welcomes several positive developments, such as the amendments to the Domestic Violence Prevention Act, the adoption of the National Action Plan on Prevention and Response to Violence against Children (2024-2028), the updated Procedure Manual and Referral Pathway on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2025), the development of the Minimum Standards for Domestic Violence Service Delivery (2024) and the publicly accessible Child Sex Offender Database (2023). It is however seriously concerned about:

(a) The pervasiveness of the violence against children, including domestic violence, sexual and gender-based violence, abuse and neglect and online abuse;

(b) The fact that the exploitation of children in the Criminal Procedure Code is not classified as a major crime and is as such limited to 30 days for investigating and prosecuting adults who exploit children into crimes, leading to impunity of the perpetrators;

(c) Societal factors, including cultural taboos, stigma, and insufficient legislative protections, that hinder effective prevention, timely reporting, and response efforts.

25. In the light of its general comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, the Committee recalls its previous observations<sup>8</sup> and recommends that the State party:

(a) Continue to effectively implement the National Action Plan for Prevention and Response to Violence against Children, and provide it with adequate financing, capacity building, robust monitoring and evaluation framework;

(b) Prioritize the investigation and prosecution of adults who exploit children for criminal activities and consider amending the Criminal Procedure Code to either classify exploitation of children as a major crime or extend the timeline for investigation;

(c) Strengthen capacity of law enforcement and social workers to effectively handle cases of online child sexual exploitation, abuse, and grooming;

(d) Ensure that all cases of the abuse of children, including sexual abuse, are promptly reported and investigated, applying a child-friendly and multisectoral approach with the aim of avoiding the revictimization of the child, that perpetrators are prosecuted and duly sanctioned and that reparations are provided to victims, as appropriate;

(e) Ensure mandatory reporting of all forms of violence against children, disseminate information about the reporting mechanisms and associated focal points that should receive such reports, and promote awareness among parents, care-givers, professionals and children themselves on the importance of reporting and on early intervention in cases of child abuse and violence;

(f) Further strengthen awareness-raising and education programmes — including campaigns — with the involvement of children, in order to raise public awareness, reduce stigma, encourage reporting, and challenge cultural taboos

<sup>8</sup> CRC/C/MDV/4-5, paras. 43, 45, 49

surrounding sexual and gender-based violence; include community/island leaders, religious figures, and media in the advocacy efforts.

#### **Corporal punishment**

26. Recalling its general comment No. 8 (2006) on corporal punishment, the Committee urges the State party to:

(a) As per the Child Rights Protection Act, strictly and effectively implement the prohibition of corporal punishment, including flogging, in all settings, including in home, schools, childcare institutions, alternative care settings and in the administration of child justice;

(b) Expand positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing and parenting initiatives, such as the Joint Positive Parenting Programme;

(c) Continue conducting awareness-raising campaigns for parents and professionals working with and for children to promote attitudinal change, within the family and the community, with regard to corporal punishment.

#### **Gang violence**

27. Noting the adverse impact on children's rights of gang violence, in particular that children under the age of 15 are exploited by gangs for crimes and drug trafficking because they cannot be held criminally liable, the Committee welcomes the adoption of the Prevention of Gang and Other Serious Offences Act in 2025 and urges the State Party to:

(a) Evaluate the effectiveness of the Prevention of Gang and Other Serious Offences Act (Act No. 7/2025);

(b) Adopt comprehensive strategies to effectively address the impact of gang violence and related drug trafficking on children. Such strategies should not be aimed at lowering the age of criminal responsibility but should primarily address the root causes of exploitation of children in gangs and drug crime, social factors that lead children into gangs, and include policies for the social integration of children and adolescents in marginalized situations;

(c) Intensify efforts to fight gangs and other criminal elements in society who exploit children in their criminal activities; investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible with appropriate penalties; and provide compensation to child victims;

(d) Establish mechanisms to rehabilitate children under the age of 15 without the requirement of criminal responsibility and ensure the involvement of the social services system in the provision of holistic interventions;

(e) Adopt programmes that provide children exploited by gangs with assistance and protection to enable them to leave gangs and be reintegrated into society.

#### **Harmful practices**

28. The Committee welcomes the prohibition of child marriage in the Child Rights Protection Act but is concerned that unregulated and undocumented child marriages still occur. Recalling joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women General comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices, and taking note of target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Develop awareness-raising campaigns and programmes on the harmful effects of child marriage and female genital mutilation on the physical and mental health and well-being of girls, targeting households, local authorities, religious leaders and judges and prosecutors;

(b) Establish protection schemes for victims of child marriage and female genital mutilation who file a complaint.

### **Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography**

29. Recalling its previous concluding observations on the report of the State Party submitted under article 12 of the Optional Protocol,<sup>9</sup> and its 2019 guidelines on the implementation of the Optional Protocol,<sup>10</sup> the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Effectively implement the existing legislation that protects children from the offences under the Optional Protocol;
- (b) Amend the national protocol for victim identification, referral and protection;
- (c) Collect disaggregated data on all the offences under the Optional Protocol, and provide adequate training to investigators on the legal aspects and different offences under the Optional Protocol;
- (d) Prosecute, without exception, the perpetrators of all offences under the Optional Protocol and punish the perpetrators without possibility for clemency.

### **Recovery and reintegration of child victims**

30. While taking into consideration the efforts of the State Party, the Committee recommends that the State Party ensure that laws and practices take fully into account the Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/20, annex). In particular, when dealing with child victims and witnesses, the State Party should make CCTV widely available, ensure that child testimonies are done in child-friendly settings and only once to avoid traumatising, ensure that children are informed in age-appropriate language of the consequences of the information being disclosed, ensure that defence lawyers have received specialised training and explicitly specify children as victims in the Anti-Torture Act.

## **E. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9–11, 18 (1)–(2), 20–21, 25 and 27 (4))**

### **Family environment**

31. The Committee draws the State party's attention to its statement under article 5 of the Convention,<sup>11</sup> recalls its previous concluding observations<sup>12</sup> and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Ensure that, in the case of parental separation, the mother and father share the parental responsibilities, unless it is not in the best interests of the child, ensuring that children's views are taken into consideration, that the best interests of the child are always given primary consideration, and build the capacity of the judiciary to undertake this assessment;
- (b) Ensure that women do not lose custody over their children in case of remarrying;
- (c) Work towards the elimination of polygamy in law and practice, while taking measures to prevent its possible harmful effects on children;
- (d) Improve the monitoring of the Single Parent Allowance so that it reaches the eligible families;
- (e) Improve the accessibility, affordability and availability of the day care system.

<sup>9</sup> CRC/C/OPSC/MDV/CO/1.

<sup>10</sup> CRC/C/156.

<sup>11</sup> [Article 5](#)

<sup>12</sup> CRC/C/MDV/4-5, para. 51



### Children deprived of a family environment

32. Drawing the State party's attention to the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children,<sup>13</sup> and emphasizing that financial and material poverty — or conditions directly and uniquely attributable to such poverty — should never be the sole justification for removing a child from parental care, for receiving a child into alternative care or for preventing a child's social reintegration, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Phase out institutionalization and adopt, without delay, a strategy and action plan for deinstitutionalization, ensuring that it has adequate human, technical and financial resources for its implementation and includes systemic transformation of the childcare, welfare and protection systems;

(b) Ensure sufficient alternative family-based and community-based care options for children who cannot stay with their families, including by allocating sufficient financial resources for foster care, regularly reviewing placement measures and facilitating the reunification of children with their families when in their best interests;

(c) Continue strengthening the fostering system by implementing and providing adequate resources for the 2024 Foster Regulation and the functioning of the Foster Care Panel, by paying the monetary allowance to foster families and by enhanced monitoring of foster families;

(d) Establish quality standards for all alternative care settings, ensure periodic review of the placement of children in foster care and institutions, and monitor the quality of care therein, including by providing accessible channels for reporting, monitoring and remedying maltreatment of children;

(e) Strengthen the capacity of professionals working with families and children, in particular family judges, law enforcement personnel, social workers and service providers, to ensure family-based alternative care responses and to enhance their awareness of the rights and needs of children deprived of a family environment;

(f) Continue raising awareness about *kafala* and its benefits.

### Children of incarcerated parents

33. The Committee recommends that the State Party ensure that children of incarcerated parents enjoy all the rights in the Convention.

## F. Children with disabilities (art. 23)

34. Recalling its general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee notes the amendments to the Disability Act and the adoption of the National Action Plan on Disability Inclusion and urges the State party to adopt a human rights-based approach to disability, set up a comprehensive strategy for the inclusion of children with disabilities and:

(a) Continue strengthening the programmes, entities and mechanisms that support children with disabilities, such as the IBAMA mechanism, Growth Monitoring and Promotion programme, the Early Identification Committee, the National registry of Persons with Disabilities and Disability Allowance, the National Social Protection Agency and the National Action Plan on Disability Inclusion, particularly in the outer islands;

(b) Streamline and establish a systematic referral pathway to ensure that children with possible developmental delays are promptly referred, assessed, and connected to appropriate support services;

<sup>13</sup> General Assembly resolution 64/142, annex.

(c) Expand specialist healthcare services for children with disabilities by incorporating trained child psychologists, psychiatrists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, and physiotherapists, particularly in regional hospitals;

(d) Expand sign language training across all frontline services, including health professionals, teachers, and law enforcement, and establish a national pool of professional interpreters to be available in hospitals, schools, and courts;

(e) Provide simplified access to specialised medical services and assistive devices through the Aasandha State health insurance scheme, particularly for children living in outer islands;

(f) Protect children with disabilities, particularly girls, from violence, including sexual abuse and bullying in schools, and provide details on the steps taken to strengthen the investigation, prosecution, and support mechanisms for such cases;

(g) Raise awareness among caretakers of children with disabilities on the availability and benefits of the disability identification card issued by the National Social Protection Agency;

(h) Undertake awareness-raising campaigns aimed at government officials, the public and families to combat the stigmatization of, and prejudice against children with disabilities and promote a positive image of children with disabilities as rights-holders;

(i) Continue strengthening co-ordination to fully support children with all forms of disability.

## **G. Health (arts. 6, 24 and 33)**

### **Health and health services**

35. Recalling its general comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Continue strengthening access to basic maternal, child health, mental and adolescent health for children in remote islands;

(b) Reduce the rise of non-communicable diseases, respiratory diseases and influenza, and address malnutrition and rising obesity due to unhealthy diet and inactivity;

(c) Expand availability of safe blood supply, including infrastructure for collection, storage, and processing in outer islands;

(d) Increase the number of trained health workers and implement targeted community awareness campaigns to counter vaccine hesitancy and misinformation;

(e) Improve infrastructure and emergency obstetric care capacity at atoll-level health facilities;

(f) Promote healthy lifestyles and behaviour from a young age and reduce obesity through encouraging healthy eating habits and physical activity, prioritizing schools and communities;

(g) Promote, protect and support breastfeeding in all policy areas where breastfeeding has an impact on child health, including obesity, certain non-communicable diseases and mental health, and fully implement the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

### **Mental and adolescent health**

36. The Committee notes efforts to improve mental health services in regional and atoll level facilities through the implementation of the Central and Regional Mental Health Services Plan (2022-2025), the integration of the sexual and reproductive education in the

national curriculum, the extension of the Aasandha scheme to private mental health providers, as well as and the amendment of the Tobacco Control Act banning e-cigarettes, vaping and related products, but remains seriously concerned about:

- (a) The rising mental health challenges among children;
- (b) Barriers in accessing sexual and reproductive health services, including contraceptives;
- (c) The growing substance abuse and limited awareness, treatment and rehabilitation programmes.

37. Recalling its general comment No. 4 (2003) on adolescent health and general comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations<sup>14</sup> and urges the State party to:

- (a) Adopt the Mental Health Bill, develop a comprehensive mental health strategy for children, and continue decentralising and integrating mental health services into primary health care, particularly in the remote islands, including through the tele-mental health support such as the National Mental Health Helpline;
- (b) Adopt a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health policy for adolescents and continue ensuring that age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education is part of the mandatory school curriculum and targeted at adolescents, with special attention on preventing early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections;
- (c) Ensure that all adolescents, including those who are out of school and those in remote islands, receive confidential and child-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services, including access to contraceptives;
- (d) Decriminalize abortion in all circumstances and ensure access to safe abortion and post-abortion care services for adolescent girls, making sure that their views are always heard and given due consideration as a part of the decision-making process;
- (e) Address the prevalence of drug use by children and adolescents by, *inter alia*, providing children and adolescents with accurate and objective information and life skills education on preventing substance abuse — including tobacco, vaping and alcohol — and develop accessible and child-friendly drug dependence treatment and rehabilitation programmes.

## H. Standard of living (arts. 18 (3), 26 and 27 (1)–(3))

38. The Committee notes the “*Komme Kujjakah Aailaaeh*” (“A Family for Every Child”) programme and the increase in the single-parent allowance and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Take targeted measures to reduce child poverty, particularly for children from single-parent households, children with disabilities and children from remote islands;
- (b) Ensure that support from the National Social Protection Agency reaches the children in most disadvantaged situations, especially those outside the capital and children belonging to minority groups;
- (c) Raise awareness among children and families about available social protection programs and ensure that children in remote communities have access to these programs.

<sup>14</sup> CRC/C/MDV/CO/4-5, para. 57

## **I. Children's rights and the environment (arts. 2-3, 6, 12-13, 15, 17, 19, 24, 26-31)**

39. Taking note of the environmental protection legislation of the State party, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Conduct an assessment of the effects of air and marine pollution and degradation of marine ecosystems on children's health as a basis for designing a well-resourced strategy to remedy the situation, and regulate the maximum concentrations of pollutants in the air and food;
- (b) Stop incineration and open burning of waste and strengthen safe and environment-friendly waste management;
- (c) Ensure that health professionals receive training in diagnosis and treatment of health impacts related to environmental harm.

**Impact of climate change on the rights of the child**

40. The Committee notes the Climate Emergency Act of 2021 and the launch of the National Climate Action Plan towards Resilience and Low-Carbon Development. Recalling its general comment No. 26 (2023) on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Ensure that children's special vulnerabilities, needs and views are taken into account in developing policies and programmes to address climate change and disaster risk management;
- (b) Increase children's awareness and preparedness for climate change and natural disasters by incorporating it into the school curriculum and teachers' training programmes;
- (c) Develop strategies for uninterrupted access to education and health services in view of frequent extreme weather events, especially in smaller island communities;
- (d) Seek bi-lateral, multi-lateral, regional and international cooperation in implementing these recommendations.

## **J. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28-31)**

**Education: aims and coverage**

41. The Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Improve upper secondary transition through initiatives, such as flexible learning pathways, modernized vocational training programs and deployment of the digitally enabled learning environments connecting children in remote islands;
- (b) Continue strengthening accessibility and the quality of education, including through satellite and hybrid schools, and provide quality training for teachers, with particular emphasis on rural areas and remote islands;
- (c) Provide a more tailored support in the early grades to address the challenges that occur because of the language translation that takes place from mother-tongue into English;
- (d) Update curricula to be responsive to rapidly changing environment and encourage direct participation of children in environmental protection as a component of their learning process;
- (e) Allocate sufficient financial resources for the expansion of the compulsory and free early childhood education, based on a comprehensive and holistic policy of early childhood care and development;

(f) Address contents in the curriculum that might contribute to negative attitude towards girls, including in respect to their capacities, job choices and contributions in the future within the labour force;

(g) Take measures to address the gender parity in school completions especially at the secondary school level.

#### **Inclusive education**

42. The Committee notes the introduction of the Inclusive Education Data Management System that allows for monitoring inclusive education through a centralized portal. It recommends that the State party:

(a) Take measures to increase the availability of inclusive education in the remote islands;

(b) Increase funding for and effectively implement inclusive education policy, and ensure that inclusive education is given priority over the placement of children in specialized classes;

(c) Ensure that all children with disabilities, children in rural areas and remote islands and girls have access to mainstream schools, ensuring that schools are equipped with trained teachers, assistive technologies, accessible infrastructure and appropriate teaching materials to better support these children.

#### **Vocational training and guidance**

43. The Committee recommends that the State party develop and promote quality vocational and technical training programs that align with labour market needs and address socio-economic barriers, limited access in remote islands, and inadequate career guidance to children.

#### **Rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts**

44. Recalling its general comment No 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts, the Committee recommends that the State party develop safe and inclusive parks and playgrounds, and ensure access to landscaped green areas and open spaces, particularly in Malé.

### **K. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32–33, 35–36, 37 (b)–(d), and 38–40 of the Convention and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict)**

#### **Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children**

45. Recalling the joint general comments No. 3 and No. 4 of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families/No. 22 and No. 23 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017) on the human rights of children in the context of international migration, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Develop an asylum system with a robust identification mechanism and identify how many children are in need of international protection;

(b) Develop comprehensive referral and case management frameworks for services to children, including in the fields of physical and mental health services, education and the police and justice sectors, including the provision of free legal aid, particularly for unaccompanied and separated children;

(c) Consider ratifying the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

**Economic exploitation, including child labour**

46. Taking note of target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Amend the regulatory framework to set 18 years as the minimum age for all hazardous work, adopt a comprehensive definition of hazardous work, consistent with ILO Convention No. 182, and strengthen the labour inspection system to ensure effective monitoring, accountability, and protection of children from all forms of economic exploitation;
- (b) Publish the mandated guidelines on employer conduct and maximum work duration to operationalise protections against child labour and strengthen oversight mechanisms to ensure accountability;
- (c) Ensure that no child engages in hazardous work and raise public awareness of child labour, its exploitative character and its consequences.

**Trafficking**

47. The Committee notes the adoption of the Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan in 2025 and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Continue strengthening its anti-trafficking initiatives and key measures in the Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan of 2025, such as the coordinated referral systems and support, and put in place a mechanism to identify children in need of protection;
- (b) Investigate all cases of child trafficking and bring perpetrators to justice;
- (c) Conduct awareness-raising activities in order to make both parents and children aware of the dangers of trafficking.

**Administration of child justice**

48. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Juvenile Justice Act which set the age of criminal responsibility to 15 years. It also notes the adoption of the Juvenile Justice Act Implementation Roadmap (2024-2027) and the establishment of the Juvenile Halfway House and a temporary Juvenile Residential Treatment Centre, as well as the visits of the National Preventive Mechanism to the detention centres. However, it is seriously concerned about:

- (a) The challenges in the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act, and the lack of trained staff, infrastructure, resources and rehabilitation programmes to affectively administer child justice;
- (b) The lack of programmes and measures for children below 15 years of age who are accused of infringing criminal law;
- (c) Delays in obtaining essential psychological reports, gender assessments, and risk evaluations, primarily due to a shortage of qualified professionals, resulting in prolonged delays throughout the judicial process;
- (d) The concerning conditions in juvenile detention centres as assessed by the Child Rights Audit of the Children's Ombudsperson Office;
- (e) The rehabilitation approach adopted by the State party with the creation of the long-term residential care facilities for juvenile offenders on the "Hope Island" as it will remove juvenile offenders from society and place them under the supervision of law enforcement officers;
- (f) Limited use of diversion, rehabilitation and reintegration services.

49. Recalling its general comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system and with reference to the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, the Committee recalls the concluding observations of the Human

Rights Committee<sup>15</sup> and urges the State party to bring its child justice system fully into line with the Convention and other relevant standards. In particular, the Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Fully implement the Juvenile Justice Act Implementation Roadmap (2024–2027), including by improving the inter-agency coordination and communication to ensure the rights of children in the child justice system;

(b) Maintain the minimum age of criminal responsibility at 15 to uphold child-rights standards and develop intensive child-friendly and multidisciplinary psycho-social programmes and measures for children under 15 years of age who are alleged as, accused of or recognized as having infringed criminal law;

(c) Strengthen early identification and family-support interventions to address risks before children enter the justice system through addressing the underlying factors including, but not limited to poverty, family violence and substance use;

(d) For the few situations where deprivation of liberty is justified as a measure of last resort, consider the recommendations by the Children’s Ombudsperson Office’s Child Rights Audit on the conditions in the juvenile detention centres; and ensure adequate number of qualified professionals, urgent infrastructure improvements, a clear categorization system for juvenile offenders, the establishment of separate facilities for girls and that detention conditions are compliant with international standards, including with regard to access to education and health services;

(e) Review the “Hope Island” programmes to ensure its compatibility with the Convention on the Rights of the Child; rather than institutionalisation, ensure the provision of diversion and mediation for children alleged as, accused of or recognized as having infringed criminal law and, wherever possible, the use of non-custodial sentences for children, such as probation or community service, and ensure that health and psycho-social services are provided to such children.

#### **Children in armed conflict including implementation of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict**

50. Noting the amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations on the report of the State Party submitted under article 8 of the Optional Protocol,<sup>16</sup> and urges the State party to:

(a) Explicitly criminalize the recruitment and use of children under the age of 18 years by the armed forces and non-State armed groups;

(b) Consider extending extraterritorial jurisdiction for crimes concerning the recruitment and use of children in hostilities;

(c) Ensure that children of deceased Maldivian males who joined Da’esh, are able to quickly and easily confirm their Maldivian nationality and be repatriated from Syria; and find durable solutions, maintaining family unity whenever it is in the best interests of the child, for those children whose mothers are not being repatriated;

(d) Cease administrative detention in the National Reintegration Centre of children based on their return from conflict zones; and instead prioritize individual assessments and alternatives to detention and explicitly state that children under the age of 15 should be exempt from appearing in court to be questioned;

(e) Address the root causes of the radicalisation and launch a public awareness campaign to inform communities about the risks involved and the measures

<sup>15</sup> CCPR/C/MDV/CO/2, para. 52(b): Review the “Hope Island” programmes to ensure its compatibility with the Covenant as well as with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, at the same time intensifying its efforts to fight gangs and other criminal elements in society who exploit children in their criminal activities, investigate, prosecute and if they are convicted, punish those responsible with appropriate penalties; and provide compensation to victims;

<sup>16</sup> CRC/C/OPAC/MDV/CO/1.

they can take to safeguard their children from radicalisation including offering positive alternatives for youth;

(f) Establish mechanisms for the early identification of children who may have been recruited or used in armed conflicts abroad upon their return to the State party, collect disaggregated data on such children and provide support for their physical and psychological recovery, rehabilitation and integration into society.

#### **L. Ratification of international human rights instruments**

51. The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, consider ratifying the following core human rights instruments:

(a) Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming to the abolition of the death penalty;

(b) International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;

(c) Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

#### **M. Cooperation with regional bodies**

52. The Committee recommends that the State party cooperate, among others, with the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children.

### **IV. Implementation and reporting**

#### **A. Follow-up and dissemination**

53. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure that the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations are fully implemented and that a child-friendly version is disseminated to, and made widely accessible for, children, including those in the most disadvantaged situations. The Committee also recommends that the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports, the written replies to the list of issues and the present concluding observations be made widely available in the languages of the country.

#### **B. National mechanism for reporting and follow-up**

54. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen the National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up and ensure that it has the mandate and the adequate human, technical and financial resources to effectively coordinate and prepare reports to international and regional human rights mechanisms and to coordinate and track national follow-up to, and implementation of, treaty obligations and the recommendations and decisions emanating from such mechanisms. The Committee emphasizes that the National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up should be adequately and continuously supported by dedicated staff and should have the capacity to consult systematically with the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives and civil society.



### C. Next report

55. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of the State party in due course, in line with the envisaged predictable reporting calendar, and following the adoption of a list of issues and questions prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State party. The report should be in compliance with the Committee's harmonized treaty-specific reporting guidelines<sup>17</sup> and should not exceed 21,200 words.<sup>18</sup> In the event that a report exceeding the established word limit is submitted, the State party will be asked to shorten the report. If the State party is not in a position to review and resubmit the report, translation thereof for the purposes of consideration by the Committee cannot be guaranteed.

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<sup>17</sup> [CRC/C/58/Rev.3](#).

<sup>18</sup> General Assembly resolution 68/268, para. 16.