



Remarks by Akiko Fujii, UNDP Resident Representative, Maldives
Project Document Signing Ceremony – Reimagining Tourism Project
07 April 2021, 10:00 at the Ministry of Tourism

Honourable Minister of Tourism, Dr. Abdulla Mausoom,
Honourable MPs,

Mohamed Visam,
Moosa Siraj,
Ali Hameed,
Mohamed Saeed

Deputy Minister of Tourism, Dr Naushad Mohamed

Distinguished guests,

- Asalaam Alaikum and Good Morning.
- I am delighted to say a few words on this momentous occasion, as we officiate the commencement of the Reimagining Tourism Project.
- First and foremost, I would like to congratulate the Ministry of Tourism for their efforts in managing the Covid-19 impacts on the industry, and their resolve in building resilience of the tourism sector.
- The reliance of the economy of the Maldives on Tourism, is seen in the numbers.
 - With over 26.3% direct contribution, and 70% indirect contribution to the GDP, it is no surprise that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been felt across multiple sectors.
 - The Rapid livelihood Assessment conducted by the Government and UNDP revealed that the ripple effect of these consequences had impacted construction, transport, wholesale and retail businesses.
 - This further stresses the need for resilience building of the tourism industry.
- I believe with the signing of the project for the Reimagining Tourism project today, we are taking an important step in working towards achieving this.
- successful implementation of the project will demonstrate sustainable models for enhancing the dividend to nature and local communities from tourism, that could potentially be grown across the country

- This engagement also gives us the opportunity to build back better, allowing us
 - to rethink the tourism offer, expanding to include the rich culture, history and the unique environmental ecosystems of the Maldives
 - a means to ensure inclusivity, by bringing the local communities and councils into the conversation
 - to accelerate and build onto existing and new linkages between local tourism development and tourism value chains.
 - an opportunity to re-imagine a more resilient and sustainable tourism.

- The conversation on reimagining a different future for tourism is a global one, and one especially relevant to Small Island Developing States (SIDs).

- The experience of the Maldives with this project, the successes, failures, challenges and lessons learnt will be of much value to other SIDs who also find themselves grappling with challenges similar to the Maldives.

- I am happy to note that the project contributes to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

- The project is also directly in line with the Maldivian Government's Strategic Action Plan as well as the priorities for the National Resilience and Recovery.

- Finally, and on behalf of UNDP and the greater UN family in the Maldives, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Tourism for the continued support and strong commitment to the project.

- *Shukriya. Thank you.*