



'Women as Peace Builders and Agents of Change in the Maldives' Launch

9 March 2021

At Ministry of Defense

Remarks

AKIKO FUJII, UNDP RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE IN THE MALDIVES

Greetings

Honorable Minister of Defense, H.E. Maria Didi

Honorable Minister of Gender, Family and Social Services, H.E. Aishath Mohamad Didi

Japanese Ambassador, H.E. Keiko Yanai

Good evening. I am delighted to join you at the launch of this important report. Not only is this the week of International Women's Day, but we also stand at a critical moment in the history of Maldives' political development. Maldives is about to implement an historic 33% of seats reserved for women in the forthcoming local elections. I believe this year will be a momentous year for women's leadership in Maldives.

Women are key to achieving sustainable peace and development solutions to many of society's problems. Yet women remain largely excluded from decision-making processes. One of the fundamental challenges is simple bias, as evidenced by UNDP's Gender Social Norms Index, released in 2020, which showed that worldwide, nine out of ten people have a bias and prejudice against women's involvement in political leadership.

This important study, 'Women as Peace Builders and Agents of Change in the Maldives', shows how applying a gender perspective in peace and political processes can reduce bias, prevent further undermining of women's rights, and ensure inclusive and sustainable peacemaking and peace-building. In particular, the report's outline for a gendered analysis of radicalization and violent extremism is critical and timely.

Building a just, inclusive, and peaceful nation requires a whole-of-society effort. Everyone has to be in it. UNDP continues our support to our partners such as the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), along with other stakeholders, in order to engage with women as social agents and drivers of positive change.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our wonderful partners. It is heartening to see our partnerships bring to fruition initiatives such as this study, conducted under the leadership of the Government of Maldives, with generous support from the Government of Japan.

Gender equality is an enabler and accelerator for the Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP stands ready to support the Government of Maldives as it embraces a gender responsive approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This will create a sustainable pathway towards a better economy, and peaceful and tolerant communities, as we Build Forward Better.