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MALDIVES

Statement of H.E. Mohamed Aslam, Minister of Environment and Housing, of , to the High-Level Segment of COP16,

8 December 2010

Your Excellencies, distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to express my thanks and full support to the Mexican presidency, for overseeing such a well run, open and transparent Conference of the Parties here in Cancun.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Given the short time slot we all have to make our statements here, let me get straight down to business.

There is much talk about numbers here in Cancun. We already know which numbers are necessary to ensure our survival. And we know the numbers necessary for the survival of other small island states, which are threatened by coral bleaching, ocean acidification, saltwater intrusion, coastal erosion and sea level rise. Those numbers are CO2 concentration of 350 ppm and temperature rise well below 1.5C. These numbers are strongly backed by science.

I would also like to pick up another area of concern to small island developing states. Small island states are a special category of nations, nations that have done little or nothing to cause the climate crisis but who stand to be hit first, and hit hardest.

These nations need particular adaptation support. Let me give you one example why: The Maldives is a nation of 1,200 tiny islands. None of our islands are higher than 2m above sea level. The total area of our islands sums up to

300 sq. km. The total length of our shoreline sums up to 644 km. Now if you stretch 644km of shoreline and put behind it the 300sqkm of land, the Maldives becomes essentially a strip of very low lying coastline with less than 500m of dry land behind it.

Our country is entirely made of coastline – and the price tag for protecting this long coastline from the rising seas is over $3 billion. That is a lot of money for a country of 350,000 people.

It is imperative that small island states are treated as a special category, given our existential vulnerability to climate change. Therefore we expect this conference to result in a strong outcome on adaptation for the survival of Maldives and every other small island low lying state.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

During Copenhagen we made every effort to keep the process alive, and despite its failings I believe the Accord was an important step forward. In it our leaders gave a political commitment to many important issues in the climate negotiations. For the first time in these negotiations, all major emitters submitted pledges to take substantial action on mitigation. These pledges however still sit in legal limbo. Our most important task now is to anchor them all into a legal instrument which captures their progress but also ensures that they can be made more ambitious in future as we begin the serious transition to a low-carbon world.

Thank you.