

PRESS RELEASE



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Government and UNDP signs project to support civic engagement in the Maldives

Male', August 19, 2010: Under the defining of rights of freedom of expression and association in the Constitution, a two-year project on "Strengthening and Enhancing Civic Engagement in the Maldives" was signed today by the United Nations Development Programme and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The project supports the government's strategy to promote an environment that encourages the participation of civil society actors in matters of national importance, including decision-making and development.

The three year project, amounting to US \$ 595,000, will strengthen the capacity of the civil society and improve the quality of interaction between the government and civil society. This will involve strengthening the legal and regulatory framework, the availability and exchange of information, capacity development, and coordination mechanisms.

The goal of the project is to assist civil society organizations (CSOs) to become more efficient, accountable development partners, to engage meaningfully in advocacy, and increase the delivery of services to the public, particularly to the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged. This is in line with UNDP's global rights-based pro poor approach to development programming.

At the ceremony, the Minister of Home Affairs, Honourable Mr. Mohamed Shihab, reiterated that civil society development is a key national priority. The Minister noted that this project will contribute towards addressing the needs of different segments of society and focus on many of the challenges highlighted by CSOs in the country; among them modifications of the legal and regulatory framework for civil society organizations.

"The UN places the highest value on civil society development, and recognizes their important role in taking forward democracy and development in the country," stated Mr. Andrew Cox, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, speaking at the signing ceremony. Mr. Cox further stated that this project is being launched at an opportune moment as the strengthening of civil society will support the decentralization process.

Support to civil society is a priority area in UNDP-supported initiatives. In June, UNDP and AusAID signed an agreement to develop civil society in the Maldives. Some past initiatives that were carried out by UNDP that have focused exclusively on supporting NGOs and community-based initiatives include the Atoll Development for Sustainable Livelihoods (ADSL) II project and the South-South Grants Programme, which focused more exclusively on Tsunami recovery efforts.

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