



ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ಮತ್ತು ದಿನಾಂಕ

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15 ಮಾರ್ಚ್ 2022

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12:45 : ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ಮತ್ತು ದಿನಾಂಕ

{ 2022 15 15 2022 }

Chairman speaking:

On behalf of the committee and myself I would like to exchange very warm welcome to Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon and Her Excellency Caron Röhsler and team. Thank you so much for giving us this time. We are one of the newest committees of the parliament, newest standing committees. We work on human rights and gender issues. We are committee of 11 members represented by obviously the Maldivian Democratic Party, independent member, there is one independent member and also from MNP (Maldives National Party). And I am most delighted to have this opportunity to exchange with you and I would like to hence give the floor to you. I understand you have a very tight schedule today. Thank you.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon – Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister’s Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict speaking:

First of all, thank you and thank you for making the time to meet with me. And it’s my first official visit to the Maldives and I arrive at the crack of dawn this morning. Unlike with all visits the intense such over pack program and certainly has been exactly that with meetings with both the minister of defense, minister of foreign affairs some internal meetings and briefings with our teams on the ground. Including seen how strengthening develops corporation and training through some of our work that we do with the Maldives equally important is the work we are doing in terms of strengthening democracy which is a real tribute to the Maldives. And the area in challenge both around with some neighbors but equally as a country within the Islamic world that you see real progress the issue of the sustainability and strengthening of democracy the fact that, you know the election has been changing of political parties. And for that we done and happen peacefully and things to continue as a real strength of the under light democracy which exists. I am delighted that there is a committee looking specifically issues of human rights and broad range of responsibilities ever increasing at the upcoming commonwealth and development office. The human rights brief is particularly challenging one, but I would equally underline there is an extremely rewarding one as well. I take the view that if through my actions, my words through inter-reactions or interventions. If my legacy is all about the how I manage to change the trajectory and improve the life one person through my efforts than it would



have been worth all the effort and more. And that’s really a guiding principle when it comes strengthen broad range of human rights. And I am also pleased to see that your responsibilities include the important issue of woman looking at gender and equality and that I think is particularly pornion moment as well again referring back to Maldives as a progressive inclusive democracy about also a country which reflects Islam and its true light. I think it’s equally right not to just full of the people of the Maldives. But the broad international community a time when particularly there are government’s leaders around the world who claimed follow a particular religion and then misrepresent it. And I would go as far as saying present powers, ideology which has no resemblance to religion how you grew up with following as a born and Bred Brit with heritage from this part of the world. But equally someone who is free to practice profess his faith. It’s something that is very important to us all and seen an underline democracy where people can be very open in the protection of human rights. Actually, it’s the biggest, biggest answer that you can give to extremist narratives that seem to possess and challenge some basic fundamentals and freedoms of human rights. So, thank you for this opportunity to meet with the event, looking forward to our hope brief discussions, like any program. You see the beauty of the island and we’ve experienced the warmth of the people but often what you really experience as the wonderful nature meeting rooms as a Minister. So, you see the old Palm Tree and Sun and Sea and beautiful Sand. But nevertheless, it’s a huge pleasure to be here. And thank you, and certainly more of I have seen during the cause of this morning it’s a bustling, Male’ is bustling town. It’s an incredibly built-up city in my brief time that I noticed here. But equally at the warmth of both people, country and the beauty of the islands is very much clear to me. Thank you. I don’t know if there were any questions or thoughts you wanted to share, but I would welcome some of the work you are doing. I know we have strong partnerships with Westminster Foundation of Democracy and some of your future priorities as you see us in terms of how, what your plans are for the committee in terms of areas you would be focusing on. Thank you.

Chairman Speaking:

Thank you so much. Yes, you are definitely right. We have been working very closely with the WFT and one of our first exchanges was, exchange of experiences was in the UK. And it has been, it has influenced a lot of our work and how we do our work and I hope that we get such opportunities in the future as well. There are, we have been working on specifically on vulnerable groups related issues. One of the first laws that this committee worked on was the child rights protection law and simultaneously with the Juvenile justice



law. And very recently the amendment will be sexual offenses act. I think and believe we had a, one of the reasons why this went so smoothly, especially the sexual offenses act amendment was this kind of, was the kind of support and exchange because of the support we had through WFT. We had, we have in fact conducted a parliamentary, two parliamentary inquiries led by this committee. One was on child abuse cases and the other one was on gaps in, gender gaps which affect women and we had very close support from WFT and in fact some of the formal parliamentarians actually gender champions in the UK parliament and I, we had a quite a couple of exchanges while we were, I mean through while we were going through Covid online exchanges which were very influential and helped us guide the course of how we conducted the inquiry. And so, which is I believe one of the most important pertinent works we had done in the past year. And so, for us to continue this kind support on understanding human rights issues on how other committees such as serves in countries. In other countries not just you know, similar to us, but in other countries how they are dealing with such issues, how they are addressing through scientifically and taking it to places where we can connect the information that we collect through the realities of the people something this committee is interested in particularly parliamentary enquiries. There is so much power from what we have seen in parliamentary inquiries where the process of conducting one is also engagement with the people and so we particularly interested in extending our knowledge in understanding better how we can perform better as a human rights and gender committee with learning from experiences of other such committees. So, if this is something we can work together on I believe on that is a, that would be a very useful for us as well. In the future we are anticipating amendment to the family law this year. There will be a lot of challenges I believe where conventional and conservative views of religion will implead upon some of the progressive changes we intend to foresee with the amendments. So, I believe there are areas where we can coordinate and learn from experts in the field on issues where fundamental views, conservative prospective, in fact progressive and absolutely essential basic human rights. And so how we can resolve that true law is something that we definitely need help with, need assistance with, need learning with. So, again I hope that there will be an area that we can collaborate and learn more from. So, if anyone want to add anything... Yeah. Yes!

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon – Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister’s Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict speaking:



The short responses absolutely. I know you were previously visited I think the Welsh parliament etc. And I think they devolve nature although slightly different in the UK but, and by population size etc. But it is about how decisions are taken and informed. And our democracy is built on challenge. But I always say the challenges very well combines a constructive form, unfortunate to be member of the upper house and the house of rules. And I often say that our debates they are both qualified and qualitative. Because the people making the comments are often coming from real expert position. They may be an academic leading scientist. They may be an ex-chief of defense staff. But equally it's an informed debate and enhances both legislation and the discords that we have in the parliament. Certainly, of course however we can further strengthen and spread to hear about the relationship on WFT and again on laws that being evolving and changing. You know the area of human rights is never a job done. And I can assure you that the lens we applied for my United Kingdom perspective certainly, what I sort to drive is not a lens of arrogance of putting your hands up and saying "hey, look at us" you know who we are, and our journey wasn't easy on women's rights, on minorities, on communities, on faith, on inclusivity. You name it, the challenge we have had it. But what we do have is the experience of navigating through that challenge. Seeing how best discussions and debates lend to the strengthening of the legislative response. And we would be absolutely delighted to see how the experience of our journey can be lend to our friends and partners. So perhaps their journey is less challenging but equally further expedited by the fact that you don't have to go through decades of experience challenge and but equally that our experience can lend to some of the legislative reforms you see. But I mean what you have just said about child protection and absolutely it's one of those key areas. We still tragically in our own country have issues of child abuse. And we have issues whereby vulnerable young children for whatever reason are still targeted by malicious acts not just criminal attempt, malicious criminal acts and their protection must be a priority for any responsible government. And we continue to still have that on our agenda and so that way comes back to the point. But you can never say it's a job done. We must be vigilant. The new challenge of cause in protection of children's rights is the growth of social media, the growth of the internet. We are currently looking at online harms bill to see how the impact on the targeting individuals. The hounding's sometimes of the media. If they are reporting for example on child sex abuse scandal in a particular part of the country and their target were specifically particularly if there are woman journalists the gender issue will be played out in a very appalling way, in a disgusting way at times. So therefore, again it's important we look at the full game based on how we seek to protect those who are also calling out



these things as well. So very keen to have rather thoughts as well some of what just share some of that with you as well. Thank you.

AdduMeedhoo constituency member Rozaina Adam speaking:

Welcome lord Ahmed and his excellency Keren and team. We are so glad to have you here with us today. And my name is Rozaina and I am an MP from Addu constituency and I understand you are going to Addu tomorrow. Unfortunately, I will not be able to join you. So, I am really glad I got the chance to meet you today here. Jee has mentioned, our chair has mentioned most of the most important issues that we are working on and among them one of the other issues that I find we could use your help and experience in this issue of drugs. We have been working intensely with the gender ministry and the health ministry regarding the rehabilitation procedures and how effective they have been. And we find that we have a lot of work to do in this area. Almost 30% of the youth population are drug addicts unfortunately in Maldives. And we find that, the rehabilitation procedures that we have been practicing so far hasn't been really fruitful. So, we need to find a better ways to deal with the problem and perhaps bring more amendments to the laws which will strengthen the policies that we already have in place. I understand that health ministry is also working very hard to get better results in this area. But I think this is one area where we would really want your assistance. In specially regarding programs that have been effective in dealing with addiction. So, I just wanted to add that to what Jee has mentioned.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon – Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict speaking:

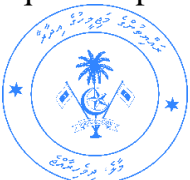
Again, I think I mean the high commissioner of this years are coordinating representative here as well. The very secretaries like different departments and obviously our colleagues in the home office lead on these particular issues on strengthening some law international cooperation on their meetings and the challenge again was highlighted to me about the source of drugs and whether we are talking about terrorism, whether we are talking about the challenge of extremism, the issues of drugs, human trafficking these aren't single issue for a single country. It's a collective issue and challenge and problem for all of us. Because some where is the source and somewhere your impact by the and it is a question of acting source. I think the issues of drugs will be unfortunately because of the situation of Afghanistan and the problems of Thaliban we will see that been becoming bigger before we will be able to deal with it. These bigger issues there are about economic source



sustainability of Afghanistan and of course in the absence of alternatives by default the Taliban will go back to as they are already and the challenges than across South Asia through borders etc... And through vessels from other parts of South Asia to here. I think we are looking at issues of defense cooperation again within the context of how we can tackle this whole issue of drug smuggling. But also, at the same time I would say you know issues of human trafficking are very much higher upon now, general as well. So, you make a personal point and I think certainly there are some schemes domestically that we have deployed and on addiction. But importantly also about prevention and early education and certainly, we can share some of those with you.

Chairman speaking:

That would be really helpful. On the note of the online harm spill about that you just mentioned, we also started working on online exploitation of children, the issue of online exploitation of children especially the increase in such cases during the pandemic, while everyone was close and was connected all the time and where children were cocooned in their own world and with parents not really understanding or not having the knowledge of how they are made prey of on the online networks. And so, one thing that our, the committee's oversight work have led to is current new policy work on current new policy on protection of children from online exploitation, at down the line I am aware that where we have to head would be strengthening of laws, perhaps an introduction of law. Because we don't, we have none on protection of children and also women from online harm. And so, I think what you are working on right now would be a really, really of real importance to us as well and if you can share that. If we can have some sort of exchange on this as this process is going on at your end and as we contemplate where we take ours that would be really helpful as well. One thing that I don't really need to say this, but I must it is just the fact that you know the Maldives parliament had since 2008 had five female MPs and now we are four against eighty-three men. We as the human rights and gender committee are very keen to see what we can do in terms of law or influence in policies on how to change that and what we can do in the current years ahead that would perhaps pave way through the legislative amendments, the legal frameworks or otherwise amendment to political party laws be a very interested to I am very keen on doing some real work that would influence and change the situation for our parliament in the future. And if there are any experiences or any, I'm sure there will be. And any exchange on this issue would be also quite helpful. Okay.



Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon – Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister’s Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict speaking:

..sponsored slightly tend in politics and political parties. But a former prime minister tourism and let her campaign women to win. And that was the whole point of identifying very early on the talent who was men. But like yourselves we were challenged by not having representatives coming forward who aspired to be members of parliament. Question was why. The question was culture, barriers, the lack of a conducive working environment particularly for young mothers who had other responsibilities and parliament suddenly reformed and certainly the house of Commons. I think in the house of lords it's good to be the age I am because I'm perceived as a young member of my house where most are above a certain age. So, the issue of child where is it support and in terms of your children matter to me but it's perhaps not the majority of the upper house but certainly in the house of Commons, they looked at the times the house said for example the issue of aligning holidays old times and with parliamentary recess times. Now these are not rocket science but they were simple measures that could been taken and were them taken which allowed women who have the knowledge, the professionalism, the experience and the ambition but also recognize that there were certain barriers and I think it's how you identify them within the parliament that said is too you know all representation is to you know mid-thirties I think in terms of representation in the house of Commons there's more to be done in that respect. But certainly, there are certain steps that you can take and also follow up. Mr. May Teresa someone I know I mean she was my, she got me into politics frankly I was eighteen years old when she appeared on our doorstep of my parents' house. And you know I have known her such long time both her and her husband. But her principle and was what she was our local Councilor. Then I went on to when she moves to national parliament. And I took hers you know I win on to her seat in local government. But she was very inspirational and leading this charge and it was a good woman to win and simply creating holding events and using yourself as people who have done so and so also sharing with them the barriers to her doors and there are a lot of them to get through. But you know you should never give up. I mean I look at diversity over our representation both in terms of women and diversity in terms of ethnicity within our parliament. But also, I am a member of the conservative central right party twenty years ago if someone had come to me and I was a member of the conservative party at that time. And san tarig you know in twenty years' time you will be a member of conservative government... by if equally there is said that the conservative government will have names such as Ahmed, Patel, Sharma, Sajid,





Javid, Gaze Partain, Nadheem Zahavidh. And actually, it won't be a labor left government of center, it would be a center right conservative government. I have thought you know on something if I can put it that way. But actually, it changes. Society also evolves. And equally you got to be resilient to fighting. Did I face prodigious in my political journey? Absolutely. But I faced in my professional journey. Did I face barriers in political and professional journey? Yes. Did I have people who told me that I won't to be able to make it because of who I was whatever absolutely. And I think those are common identifies and barriers you have faced. By living with us parting for Margaret Thatcher that I met her once. And I have now appointed the second female prime minister of our Country. And I was just a young activist at that time. And I was at a dinner, and she came up. And she walked past me, and she asked me my name. I told her Tariq Ahmed, and she went fine. And she said are you interested in politics, and I smiled, and I said yes. And she moved on. And then she came back whatever struck her back down the line and said I'll tell you something. What your; Its Tariq isn't it? Yes, I am Tariq. She said look Tariq, I am going to tell you something very specifically. People will tell you; you are not the right kind of person. People will tell you that you might not make it, or you don't fit in this seat, or you won't fit in this representative party. People will tell you even that you are not good enough. Believe in yourself, persevere, and don't give up. And it was wise words for someone who perhaps had experienced prejudice. Now she was talking to me not on the basis of gender but on the basis of my ethnicity. And she knew that I'd taken a decision to join a party that was perceived as a real establishment party. But equally that there were prejudice and barriers you would face. So, there is know, you know, there is no substitute for experience. There is no substitute for the richness and the challenge but coming out the other end and you have done it. So, there are experiences you can instill in other young women who are aspiring to be an; because when they see it, it's not; the role model world you know it's a bit tired. You know your role model. I hope, you know, all of us can be role models for different people of different gender, backgrounds, regions, faith. It's the principle of perseverance which I think ultimately is really; there are many moments I can recall where you think it's easier to pack your bags and not stay the course. But equally when you get through that on places on resilience, I think that is a major issue. But undoubtedly, the changes that you can make in the environment in the ways of working and use of the family life inclusivity of working patterns you know more regular votes for example in the house of commons they have given times for votes so you can shape your life accordingly. So, I think those are important changes that can be made. Yeah.



Chairman Speaking:

That’s alright. Thank you for sharing the experience and also very wise words. So, I think all of us respective of where our journey is can carry the inspiration, can get inspiration from those words definitely. I am aware of the time, and I am also apologetic that we have to end this engagement. We have benefitted and I am sure in the future we look forward to more engagement because of this exchange that we have been able to have. I thank you on behalf of the committee all the members and myself and our secretariat and also, the most, Maldives Parliament for giving us this opportunity, giving us this time and thinking of us. Thank you so much.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon – Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister’s Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict speaking:

Thank you. Real pleasure.

Chairman Speaking:

Thank you.

