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Chairman speaking:

A very good afternoon to you all. I just want to check whether you can hear me properly?

Aryj Hussain - Country representative for Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) Maldives Speaking:

Yes.

Chairman speaking:

Great. I would like to exchange a very warm welcome and most sincere gratitude for meeting with us and for this meeting. It’s a real honor to engage with a WFD as all ways. WFD has been one of our strongest supporters in this new journey of a very new standing committee in the Maldives parliament. We had very interesting work that we initiated together, that we are continuing together. And hence it’s really our pleasure to meet with your consultant Luka Gulsac, welcome to the committee and thank you for this time that you have given us. Without further due, I think I would just give the floor to WFD and Luka to just, I guess first of all tell us about your, this new venture and also how we can work together more. Thank you.

Aryj Hussain - Country representative for Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) Maldives Speaking:

Thank you Chair. Just I think there might have been miscommunication form our side. Our consultant for this project is Phillipa Helme. Luka Gulsac is for another meeting. I apologize that might have been just a little clerical error on our side. And before we start with the introduction let me just thank the committee. Especially the chair, for your continues support in our programs. You have helped us on numerus occasions, and



we are very grateful for your support and everything that you have facilitated for WFD throughout our, the course of our work. Just a short introduction of the participants in this meeting. We have Phillipa Helme, she is our international consultant for this project, and she has previously worked with us in regard to the national security inquiry, in regards to the assassination our attempt on The Speaker Nasheed and as well as draft of your committee guidelines for the parliament as well. She has been working very closely with the parliament committees and the parliament committees as well. And we are really grateful to have her continue to provide expertise to WFD and to the parliament through this project as well. And we also have Ahmed Naeem, who is the program coordinator for our CSS fund. Which is the conflict stability and security fund that we are working on under the WFD currently and finally It's me, who is Aryj and I am the country rep for WFD Maldives currently. Just a short introduction for the committee members who have not work with WFD with before. WFD is a UK public body, and we work towards strengthening democracy across the world. And we currently have programs in over thirty countries. Currently WFD Maldives started in 2019 and we are currently working like I said on the conflict stability and security fund. Which focuses on the parliament as the key stake holder and our thematic focus areas are mostly national security, human rights, and gender, and also climate change. So, over the course of last year, we have been working on a range of activities providing technical assistance. Like I said to the national securities in committees' inquiry. We also currently have an e-course, which is been conducted on post legislatives scrutiny and the parliament process by a Canadian university called McGill university. And we are hoping to have a study visit for committee chairs scheduled for next month, mid of next month where some of the committee chairs will be visiting the UK HOC, which we have done so previously in few years as well. So that's sort of an idea of what WFD has been and also the kind of project that we are running currently. For this meeting what we really want to talk about is how we can collaborate with human rights committee, what are the plans for the next year in regard to the committee's works, do you have anything planned or do you have anything in the works and what are the priority areas for the next year in regards to the committee's works and what you think are the areas which we can provide assistance. And so, just to start of the conversation I know you had a wonderful work done in regard to gender inquiry report last year. And we were just talking about it with Phillipa Helme as well. And I just wanted to see where there is any follow-up work being done or follow-up work to be done in regard



to the inquiry as well. And just to add in just congratulations on the work. It's really an impressive and comprehensive piece of work that you have done.

Chairman Speaking:

Thank you. Sincere apologies from our side Phillipa. Because we were told that you will be meeting with the national security committee, and we were meeting with Luka. So, I thought perhaps you know once we start the meeting, I would see Luka but actually, we were the first committee to work with Phillipa not the national security committee. In fact, when we were thinking about the conceptual framework. And how we would conduct the national inquiry we had immense support from WFD, and the best advise that we got was from you, Filipa. And one of the reasons why we did, we conducted the inquiry the way we did was the session that we had with you the advice and the support. So, I think we also have to congratulate you on the first being part of one of the first inquiries of its kind here in the Maldives. And we do the committee did decide that we will do some follow-up work on the inquiry. Especially on areas and especially fine tuning some methodology issues that we had limitations that we had due to covid as we conducted the inquiry maybe perhaps follow-up on some issues that we were not able to touch, including we did not reach out to women in prisons in the inquiry and maybe we have actually in the recommendation on the way forward in the inquiry included our ambition to work on women in prisons perhaps in the days ahead. But this is great, because yesterday we had a meeting with the education ministry and this meeting was on the prevention of children from seeking education or going to schools or into religious extremism. And yesterday in the meeting we were told there are about 41 children who are not going to school at the moment that the ministry is aware of because of religious extremism. Now 41 may seem like a small number but from where we stand, what we are thinking is 41 who have themselves declared that they are not sending their children to school because religious reasons is would actually be a bigger number in reality. Because there are so many people who would not declare so, who will not actually state that this is the reason for them not sending their children to school. We are very concerned about the right to education children. How the extremist movement is hindering this right especially for girls. And so, this is one area that we would like to definitely work on. It's going to be a difficult and a challenging one given the fact that there is so much public attack on anyone who works on religious extremism issues. Because anyone who says something about extremism is considered saying something about religion. And so, you know and there's less defense for or less



support for anyone braving any work in this area. So very strategically but effectively I, we hope to work on this need to understand the dynamics of what really goes on behind factors that lead to radicalization to the extent that they prevent the children from attending schools. And so, what is happening inside schools that are actually not able to cater to this problem such perhaps radicalization of the staffs, the teachers, communities, councils, elected officials and islands who have been radicalize themselves. So, it's a really broad issue but something we must attend to right now and this I believe that the whole committee is quite to a committed to working on this area as well. There is another new law that is coming up which is again a very new area for most of us. The bill is going to come to parliament on elderly rights, the bill on elderly rights again vulnerable group or a vulnerable group not talked about much, policies have not attended to them much, the system is not designed in a way to comprehend this issue holistically. And so, when the when the bill comes to parliament there is this committee's quite keen and interested on how we do this right. And so, we impatiently waiting for it. It might take a while, but I'm told that it is it is coming this year. So, I would like to give the floor to committee members if they have you know any areas that they would like to, that we are working on that they would like to attend to at the moment and get support from WFD always in need of support. But you know specifically certain areas of interest I would, it would be great if the committee members would express their interests. May I, member Rozaina Adam.

Addu Meedhoo Constituency member Rozaina Adam speaking:

Thank you Aryj, Phillipa for giving us this opportunity. When we were discussing the report something that also came up was how female councilors were doing in their councils. As you know we allocated 33 percent quota for female councilors, but we've been getting reports from female councilor that they were not able to fully take part in the council work and only certain types of work were allocated for them, like arranging teas and the same things that we've always been worried about. So, there was a suggestion, we made a suggestion on the flow that the local council's committee take a look at how the female councilors were performing how much support they were getting from the council itself and from the community and the kind of work that were allocated to them and whether there was discrimination in this is. So basically, something that we would like help from WFD is also to go, to do a study on this and to evaluate how successful we have been by allocating this quota and how much power we have been able to give to female councilors in terms of an equality and how much



involvement they have in the councils and in the decision-making process. Unfortunately, there were councilors who actually said that they were not, their contributions were not being taken while making decisions in the councils. These were, I mean we have not done a study of all the councilors of, all the female councilors these are individual cases. So, we would like to know whether this is something that's happening throughout all the councils, how much this is happening and whether a lot of female councilors were facing these kinds of challenges. Of Course, there were other councilors who appreciated the support that they were getting from their partners in the council and said that their work was also being appreciated. And that they were fully taking part in the decision-making process. So, this is something that we would further like to investigate. Thank you.

Chairman speaking:

Just one more area that we have being contemplating, designing work around. Often times what we do is we make we think we make an exhaustive, very effective law and then we leave at that. I would like to start some work on monitoring and engaging to find out the implementation of these laws. For instance, the work that we, this committee has done on the juvenile justice law and the child rights protection law is it was highly exhaustive consultative process. We had all the areas of concern addressed as much as we can, remedies put in the law. And we really don't know right now where you know how the implementation is going. We also think as a committee, as all committees should do follow-up work on the laws that they passed the legislative pieces of legislation that they amend. And, but we are not sure how best to do it. We have a general idea. But if we can have some advice and support on establishing a system where the committees put themselves on auto run on you know passing and also you know a periodic follow-up of what is happening in the implementation of these laws. I do not think that it is very effective when we find out five or six years later that something in the law was not implemented or did not work in favor of the rights holders or the people or persons it was targeted for. And that their institutors were failing in the parliament didn't know. And the reality in the ground is very different from you know what is actually written in the law and what was envisioned in the law. There are lot of interesting things happening posts these laws in the Maldives. The first restorative justice program is about to be rolled out; we are moving away from institutionalized care for children who needs state care. We are moving away from that to community-based fostering system which was, what was envisioned in the law. We wanted this



institutionalization culture to be done away with. And so, it's happening and while it's happening just to ensure the success of the vision and just to make sure that in the end the children that we targeted this for are the true beneficiaries. We would like to follow-up, do continues and periodic follow-up of the laws that we pass and the amendments we bring to legislation. And so, if this is something, I am sure that there are parliaments around the world that are doing that. And if there are good practices, we would like to learn from that. And may be perhaps discuss some of our realities as well and make our own custom-made system whereby you know three years from now even if this committee is not here, I hope some of these members make it. But even if we are not here, we are sure that the system, the parliament is following up as an auto run. So yes, over to you.

Aryj Hussain - Country representative for Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) Maldives Speaking:

Thank you so much. I will just let Phillipa, Ahmed, if you have any questions or comments.

Phillipa Helme - Consultant for Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) Maldives Speaking:

Yes, I would like to say hello to the committee and it's a pleasure to meet you again and I am delighted the advice we gave you right before your enquiry began was helpful and it sounds it you did really good and important work. And if I can help in any way with following that path that would be brilliant. And I just thought I would pick up a couple of things you said, or you asked about certainly post legislative scrutiny I am looking at the way legislation is implemented is something the parliaments across the world are trying to do better. I think that, well I think it can be quite challenging. Because there is so much legislation to decide what to focus on. So, I think it's probably better to focus on some particular pieces of legislation in which you have a particular interest. And you have mentioned some which is helpful rather than attempting to scrutinize everything. But and again, there is a question about what is for parliament and what is for government, and it would be interesting to know whether your government is doing any post legislative scrutiny. But that's certainly something which I am sure WFD would be able to give you further advice and I would be happy to assist if that was possible. As to the follow-up work that is again something that we could give some general thoughts on how to approach the follow-up. One thing I would say is having to think through



how you are going to do this work and what your priorities are of your timetable. Because I, you know I think because I said when I first met you it's important not to as we say here bite off more than you can chew you know to be able to give real quality attention to a few things is better than try to do too much probably. So that's a question I swaps for you to think about your time and priority. Now somethings may be able to be done at staff level without bothering members or you may be able to commit in other people to do work for you. But thinking about how it all fix together with the new demands that will an ever become like the new legislation that you mentioned which sounds really interesting. It sounds if you have a lot on your plate but if there is anything we can do to help with that it would be a great to do so. Thank you.

Aryj Hussain - Country representative for Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) Maldives Speaking:

Thank you Phillipa. I think I completely agree with you. I mean this is all a lot of important work that you talked about. And I am just looking through everything and It's not like, I just want to mention that it's not just one activity we have plan for the next year as well. We do have a lot of activities under the project which regards to post legislative scrutiny, we have some relating to other key stake holders as well we are trying to work with LGA, HRCM. So other institutions to sort of see how on one hand the kind of review process that the government has or how these institutions are working towards post legislative scrutiny and the implementation of these laws as well. So, this is sort of like really good time to look at what your priority areas are. Because we are just in the process of designing the kind of activities, we are plaining for this year. And I just wanted to ask because you have done an inquiry report and a large one at that were there any obstacles, were there anything's that were that you, any kind of lessons that you learned maybe on that whole process. And is there any where we can like sort of provide additional guidance or additional support if you were to lets say do a similar inquiry right now or do something different or follow-up or recommendations or anything like that if that make sense.

Chairman speaking:

Yes, it does Aryj. Thank you. There is something interesting I am thinking just an idea that came to me just now while thinking about how we manage our ambitions around the committee this year. What is also really interesting with this committee is the fact that we have a human rights commission. So, which means they come under, I mean we





conduct oversight of the human rights commission. So, we can, there are some things we can ask the human rights commission to do. For example, which is legislative scrutiny. And so maybe with us what we can, if you can support HRC on how to do legislative scrutiny what we can do is ask them to do the legislative scrutiny and provide us with the report. And therefore, from there on maybe we can decide what we can do with that report in the plenary. And so, I suppose you know because of the nature of this committee we don't necessarily have to do the follow up and if we can assign the independent, there are 2 independent institutions that we were assigned that can do that for us. One is the child rights ombudsperson and then the human rights commission itself. So, by default our scrutiny work as long as the human rights commission exists, I suppose we do have a system then. And what we can guide within perhaps, but you can do is guide them on how to do that scrutiny and what to include in that so that you know in parliament can work on that afterwards. And so perhaps maybe we can relax on the scrutiny especially because we have institutions that are mandated to do follow-up work and kind of oversight of how the government is performing. And so maybe perhaps it can easily fit that in. So may be priority area definitely one is what is happening to the WDCs posed, you know how women in public officers that have come into those officers post the quarter that we introduced through this parliament, how meaningful is there representation definitely something this committee would like to work on. The second one as a priority area is I think we will have to discuss as a committee and get back to you perhaps but please do keep the access to radicalization of children in and how the radicalization of children is done. We would like to understand this phenomenon and work on it and try and trying to get government and other state institutions to conduct immediate interventions. And so, these 2 areas definitely on our list and up high on the priority list and that we would like for you to work with us on that if you may. And as for lessons learned from enquiries it's really hard to objectively and effectively assess and say something about the challenges because all the challenges around it revolved around the challenges because of covid. We could not interface with them with the participants of the research. We conducted an online survey. Therefore, we are not able to you know properly conduct the breakdown of the responders and it's so important, of course we can we have the gender, but we don't know from when, I mean when you post an online survey about gender equality the man who answer would be the men who are really actually interested in and want to work for gender equality. So, are we getting you know the real information nowadays is credible information is a big question? And so, a lot of things were related



to the challenges with covid. So, but something a lesson that we learned and something that is a great take away is the fact that we did it through the National University. We didn't do it. So of course, we did that you know we have the desk review part and all of that but a good take away is that the more we engage academic bodies with our work the one objective it's so thorough and professional and we can keep away all the politics that is always there in the parliament away from it. And we can you know find a shortcut to not having the competency to do it. We don't need to know how to do it ourselves where we can get other people to do it for us and then learn something along the way. And so that is there. Another challenge that we have is how to communicate the findings better so that state institutions start acting on it. I mean it may, I'm afraid that it might just be dusting around somewhere 1 or 2 years down the line so the whole purpose of an inquiry, parliament inquiry is to get people to act on it. And how do we do that post, I mean there is no legal status. You know it's different from a law. Once you pass the law everyone has to abide by it. Parliamentary inquiry, there is a lot of good will that is needed for it to become effective. And so maybe some sort of follow-up works, some questioning, some oversight is needed post that as well. So, another lesson learnt from this process is that we can only do perhaps one inquiry per term. The time that is taken to conduct an inquiry if we are doing it thoroughly. Maybe there are you know, different; I mean if we change the methodology around maybe we can squeeze in one more if, you know, if there is a desk review, if there is one of qualitative nature where we don't need you know big numbers that a quantitative one requires or a maybe just a mixed method one. Maybe we can do something. But maximum two. The takeaway is that if we are to do this, we have to take, consider the time. And if parliament is doing inquiry people should have interest in it. We can't, I mean there are so many areas that we really need to focus on. But if people are not interested it's, we need to choose a topic not just because its needed but also because there is interest around it. On that day the parliament, on the day that we presented the inquiry to plenary on the floor everybody spoke. All the parliament members they had something to say, and they had something to give, and they had, it was really good. The engagement was really good. It was vibrant. For the first time we had a, any university come to the parliament and present a research, they did it. And so, the ownership was shared. And it was not just ours and so it felt like, you know we touched everybody. And so, that was good. So, I think another takeaway is being mindful about the topic and making sure that we take something on that everybody has an interest in. And the



parliament has an interest in you need. At the end of the day, you need political will to get something more. So, I think, yes, that's it. Do you want to add something? Yup.

Aryj Hussain - Country representative for Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) Maldives Speaking:

Philippa, would you like to add something?

Phillipa Helme - Consultant for Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) Maldives Speaking:

It's very interesting to hear about your lessons learnt from your inquiry and it sets more questions in my mind. Because it sounds as you were very successful at presenting the report and getting interest in the parliament. But that you have some doubts about whether anything is happening. Is that fair? So, I was wondering, and this is something we can think about more if you can whether you might do something quite soon to follow it up. Because follow-ups can be done at different stages for different reasons. You know, much later on you can think about whether your recommendations had impact in things. But that is too soon for that. But quite often I think which is publish the report and there maybe media excitement and political excitement but then it falls away and people forget, political agenda moves on. And so, a little bit of time afterwards it might be worth making some effort to recommunicate the report. You know at different possibilities, you could have the Minister in to ask what you know, what government is doing, or you could have some kind of event to you know, have the university in again and use their connections or you could write to the main stakeholder organizations, recommunicating report and ask them particularly things that. It's for you to think about what's most useful. I am just saying it can be useful, you know a little bit after publication to recommunicate, to re-energize the activity rather than, and then later on you can come back to the impact. Thank you.

Chairman speaking:

Thank you. I don't think we have any further interventions at the moment. But we will definitely get back to Aryj the moment we have you know, anything that we would like to work with you on. And I am sure there will be many interesting things that will come along the way, and I hope that it fits your next year's agenda. Yeah, as of now I think we would really, we definitely would want to work on the WDC, the implementations, the effective participation of women in public life. We definitely want to work on that.



We definitely want to work on the radicalization of children issue. And if you can keep that in your agenda for us it would be great.

Aryj Hussain - Country representative for Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) Maldives Speaking:

Thank you, Chair for the... that you have provided and I just wanted to, like off the top of my head I was thinking because we will be working with HRCM and like you mentioned, and this is kind of where I was sort of heading as well in regards to post legislative scrutiny and the kind work that you are planning on doing for the year, it would be good to have the HRCM and your sort of priorities sort of aligned. Because I know that HRCM already has sort of a legislative agenda for reviewing of laws and so on. And to sort of align that with the kind of work that you are doing so that you are not like pulling on limited resources but just working in a more homogenized way. This is something that we can go into and then maybe go on towards what you mentioned in creating systematic approaches of these kind of scrutiny of laws by the human rights committee as well as the human rights commission of the Maldives as well. And just adding on to what Philippa was mentioning on communicating the findings and re-energizing on the inquiry report itself, that’s also something that just off the top of my head these two can be something that we can really focus on. And if we were to focus on those the high priorities areas in regard to female counsellors, in regard to right to education these can be prioritized because HRCM would sort of lead on those kinds of inquiries. And you can, human rights committee can sort scrutinize the kind of work that they are doing. And it becomes a more holistic way of dealing with these kinds of issues. And just, yah. I think that’s something that we can maybe go back and brainstorm on and come back to you with some ideas on how we can collaborate more. Ahmed, do you have anything more to add?

Ahmed Naeem - Programme Coordinator for Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) Maldives Speaking:

I think I have... observations. As chairman said, I think some work around inquiries and... provided expertise. And Philippa has provided expertise in the last year to the Human Rights and Gender Committee. So, we have inquiries that we could provide expert advice. And then also... so involves some of the human rights experts as well. It requires thematic expertise. And then we have some of bills that... expert advice. I think bill on elderly rights that may very well be possible as well. Have some couple of



follow-up plans. Follow-up plans in the sense one on the gender inquiry and there is some post legislative scrutiny work around engagement and understanding of implementation of laws that has been passed. And I think that's also one area that WDF specializes... post legislative scrutiny and that we can go on for some detailed engagement... that they can guide on maybe with a plan, to come up with a plan to conduct post legislative scrutiny and so on. So, I think all these areas really, it really is... priorities and I think that, and it's really good for us as well. Thank you.

Chairman speaking:

Great. As we go along, I think you know the collaboration with HRCM sounds like a great idea. I'll reach and also perhaps if we are doing anything on the child rights protection law, we must engage with the child rights ombudsperson as well if that is you know on your agenda and if you can make some space we definitely would want to follow-up on the child rights protection law for legislate scrutiny, post legislate scrutiny and then I don't think we will be, we can do it without the child rights ombudsperson involvement. Because the law stipulates that it is the child rights ombudspersons mandate and duty to follow-up on the law. So maybe you know how we manage the dynamic between the HRCM and the child rights ombudsperson if we are to go ahead with this one it needs to be worked out. And if we are to, I mean follow-up on the juvenal justice law then we can easily go with HRCM. But we will have a mandate issue with the child rights protection law. Because there is one specific stipulated for child ombudsperson. So, if you can find a way to accommodate that it would be great. I suppose something that is also, that I forgot to mention that is struggle with towards the publication of the report was translation of it. Because you know we have to keep it in mind how we communicate and to which extent we can communicate it to I think it's important that you know cross the language barrier here amendment and everybody is able to excess the information in the inquiry. So, definitely an area that might need to ask support from you. So, I just wanted to say that. So, if all is in order with other members, I think we can bring to a close this meeting and we thank you once again for keeping such a close relationship with the committee and keeping us on your thoughts and making sure that how we do what we are supposed to do right. Thank you so much Phillipa, Aryj, Ahmed it's always a pleasure. Thank you.

Aryj Hussain - Country representative for Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) Maldives Speaking:



Thank you so much for hearing us this opportunity as well. We look forward to working with your committee and coming back to you with some ideas for this year. Thankyou. Bye.

بىرلەشكەن مىللەتلەر تەشكىلاتى:

دۇنيا بىرلەشكەن مىللەتلەر تەشكىلاتى 5 نۆمبىر 2022

