

**4th SOUTH ASIAN SPEAKERS SUMMIT ON ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

1 SEPTEMBER 2019 (SUNDAY)

OPENING REMARKS BY

**HON. PRESIDENT MOHAMED NASHEED MP, SPEAKER OF THE PEOPLE'S
MAJLIS**

Good morning.

Speakers, Members of Parliaments, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the Opening Session of the 4th South Asian Speakers Summit on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

I would like to thank and welcome the Secretary General of IPU Mr. Martin Chungong for being with us today, and although she could not be here with us today, I would like to thank the President of the IPU Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron and IPU staff for their support in planning and organizing this Summit.

I also offer a very heartfelt welcome to my colleagues and friends, the Honorable Speakers of South Asian countries, who have made a very special effort to be with us today.

Speakers, Members of Parliaments, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Welcome to the Maldives and Welcome to the Maldives Peoples Majlis, our Parliament.

Our people have always wanted a decent life.

A good life; A roof over their head; A stable job and a decent wage; Education for their children; A good school;

They want to be treated when ill, Just ordinary things; running water; a sewerage system,

Excellencies: They also do not want to be bored out of their minds- in their villages, in their islands, they want a good life.

They want to be happy and not be beaten up or ill-treated.

They want Fairness and justice; they want to be governed by people they choose, and they want to be governed well.

Excellencies, they want a good life. *Thaahiru Dhiri Ulumeh*, as my own political party once phrased in Dhivehi.

Sustainable development goals aim to achieve, the betterment of the human.

The rationale for the Inter Parliamentary Union, member states' Speakers - to meet in summit to achieve these goals indicates one very fundamental truth.

The Inter Parliamentary Union is a unique organization made up of national parliaments from around the world. They protect and build global democracy through political dialogue and concrete action.

So, it is the core belief held by the IPU - the belief that our lot can only improve through Good Governance, stands as the rationale for this summit.

The acceptance that it is Democratic Governance that can deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.

We get elected through organized and peaceful political activity.

We get elected through Political Parties.

Our Parties pledge A good life to the people; we pledge a roof over their head, we pledge them stable jobs, we pledge them a decent wage, we pledge them education for their children, we pledge good schools, we pledge them rule of law, we pledge them running water, uninterrupted electricity and sewerage.

Speakers, Members of Parliaments, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, we pledge them that they need not be bored and that they will be happy.

We are elected based on the extent of the people's acceptance of our pledges.

Based upon the extent of trust the people have on us.

Our pledges form the body of our election manifesto. We get elected and form Governments when people accept our Manifesto. The Parliament's legislative agenda and the action plans of the Government's facilitates the delivery of our Manifesto's.

It is this realization, that brings all the Speakers of South Asian Parliaments to summit to discuss the Sustainable Development goals Agenda 2030.

Excellencies, we are talking about sustainable development goals and each year, scientists give out a new record for categories such as: hottest year overall, hottest winter, hottest day, or the biggest loss of sea ice or strongest winds ever.

It's like an evening at the climate Oscars.

A challenge for politicians, for us politicians, especially those from the political centre, is to find a way to deal with the growing threat from climate change...

... while also revitalising our economies and ensuring our politics doesn't become extremist.

In short, we need to fix our climate, our economics and our politics.

I think the key question that will dominate the next few decades is:

Can we find ways to slash greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to higher temperatures, while also generating inclusive economic growth?

There are already powerful trends we can predict.

The decision by German politicians in the early part of this century -- in response to pressure from voters -- to invest in solar power was the seed for the creation of a viable renewable energy industry.

Chinese manufacturers got on board and the price of renewable energy collapsed; this made the economics more attractive, which made it easier to generate further political will in other countries,

This led to the Paris Climate Accord

By the time the Paris Accord was signed at the end of 2015, the price of solar power had fallen some 60%.

When we announced the Maldives' carbon neutral plan in 2009, most people thought we were mad.

They never believed we could produce electricity from renewables cheaper than we were generating it with diesel.

What a difference 9 years makes.

It is now clear that a solar + battery hybrid system will produce electricity cheaper than diesel on any given situation.

If batteries follow solar panels and fall in price, then distributed energy systems could be transformative.

This will be hugely relevant, especially for developing countries that don't have big electricity grids.

We probably won't bother building big electricity grids, where a substantial amount of energy produced is wasted.

The second area I wanted to touch on is transport.

Self-driving, electric cars will reduce traffic deaths, and improve air quality in cities and towns.

In South Asia, in particular, smog is a major political issue. In New Delhi, it's perhaps the most important issue for voters.

Asian countries are leading the way in shifting to electric cars: India has announced all new cars on its roads must be electric by 2030.

The third area I wanted to mention is farming and land use.

By 2050, the world will have around 9 billion mouths to feed - 2 billion more than today.

Governments will feed these people by either ripping up wilderness areas and converting them to farmland, or finding a way to increase the productivity of existing farms.

We don't want to see the remaining tropical forests destroyed, and so I hope we can use technology to improve farming yields, as we have done since the 1970s.

I also hope that new methods, such as city farms and vertical farming, mean, we can create new areas in which to grow food, such as in cities.

If technology can continue to boost agricultural productivity, it could lead to one of the most positive aspects of environmentalism in recent years: re-wilding.

This means that we can focus resources on high yield farms, and allow marginal lands to revert back to nature.

Changes in energy, transport and farming would lead to a world that is starting to heal.

Rather than environmental problems getting worse every year, they would start to get better.

These changes should make for excellent policies, in an election manifesto.

It is these changes that now need to be reflected in all our political manifestos: changes that make our people's lives and the climate sustainable. Changes that will deliver them a fair and just life, economically and politically, without damaging the world around us.

A political party could pledge to create so many thousands of jobs in wind and solar energy.

A manifesto could include a commitment to improve air pollution by phasing out all cars powered by fossil fuels.

A manifesto could include a pledge to increase the amount of land left to wilderness.

All these ideas, if framed correctly, could have huge voter appeal.

And we need to ensure that Low Carbon Development Strategies are included in manifestos.

If we can frame policies as a way to create jobs, re-energize communities hit by globalisation, improve living conditions, and solve climate change, then I think we are onto a winner.

Speakers, Members of Parliaments, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

We hope that during the next two days we will all be able to sit in conference, discuss, deliberate and decide and come to resolution on our views on the issue at hand: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you