

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



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## **PRACTICE PARLIAMENT PROGRAMMES FOR 2023 CONCLUDES**

The Practice Parliament Programmes for the year have concluded with the successful completion of the Practice Parliament for Youth, which took place from June 11th to June 17th, 2023. This marks the third year of the series, a collaborative initiative between the People's Majlis of the Maldives and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Maldives, supported by the Government of Australia.

The Practice Parliament programme aims to empower women and youth to actively participate in the decision-making processes of the country. It focuses on capacity development and training for women and youth involved or interested in politics, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to contest elected positions. Building on the success of previous years, the Practice Parliament series consisted of three programmes conducted throughout the year.

Since its inception in 2021, the Practice Parliament programme has seen the active participation of individuals from across the country. In total, the programme has provided valuable opportunities to 191 women and 94 youth from various regions of the Maldives, fostering inclusive political participation.

Earlier this year, two batches of the Practice Parliament for Women were conducted, with the first batch taking place from 12 to 18 February, followed by the second batch from 26 February to 4 March. These two programmes saw the successful participation of 75 women (aged over 25 years), including 8 Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). This batch of Practice Parliament for Youth saw the successful completion of the programme by 37 young individuals (between 16-25 years) including 3 young PWDs.

In each seven-day programme, participants were informed on the fundamentals of civic education, key parliamentary processes, and relevant policy issues. The highlight of the programmes was the Practice Parliament Sitting where they performed model parliamentary proceedings to gain practical experience.

Sessions were conducted by People's Majlis and UNDP Maldives along with different government and civil society organisation partners, including the Ministry of Gender, Family



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and Social Services, Prosecutor General's Office, Information Commissioner's Office, Local Government Authority and Society for Health Education (SHE) touching on key topics such as the National Gender Equality Action Plan, different types of law-making, Right to Information, decentralisation in the Maldives and challenges to social cohesion with a focus on youth and women in the respective programmes. Participants also met with the Speaker of the People's Majlis, Honorable President Mohamed Nasheed, Deputy Speaker Honorable Eva Abdulla, and esteemed Members of Parliament (MPs), including MP Hussain Firushan, MP Meekail Ahmed Naseem, MP Jeehaan Mahmood, MP Hisaan Hussain, and MP Rozaina Adam, along with the Deputy Prosecutor General Uz. Ali Sameer during the sessions.

“Today's young people are equipped with abundant avenues and resources to express their convictions. By actively engaging and getting involved, young people have the power to effect transformative change. This programme acts as a guiding platform for young individuals, including women, enabling them to gain valuable knowledge about the intricate workings of Parliament. This empowering experience equips them to become architects of our society, capable of shaping their own future.” said Deputy Speaker of the Parliament, Honorable Eva Abdulla speaking at the closing ceremony held today.

Speaking at the event, His Excellency Andrew Hodges, the Australian Deputy High Commissioner to the Maldives, highlighted Australia's decade-long partnership in Maldives' governance and reform since transitioning to democracy in 2008. “In democracy, youth play an integral role in grassroots decision making processes. Your perspectives are key to modern, innovative, and inclusive governance, and to ensuring that new ideas come to the fore,” he said, addressing the participants.

Practice Parliament builds on the concept of experiential learning to provide the opportunity for aspiring individuals to learn by doing, build new networks and allies through shared understanding, engage in dialogue with other individuals of the same cohort to further inform their values and perspectives, and enable them to acquire new skills at a practical setting to improve their ability to become effective change makers and legislators.

UNDP's Deputy Resident Representative in the Maldives, Vera Hakim, emphasized the crucial need for the voices of youth to be heard in the political and public sphere, “Our nation's young population represents approximately 33% of the Maldivian demographic. It is crucial that their voices are heard, and their perspectives are considered in decision-making processes. By excluding them, we risk marginalizing a significant portion of our society and hindering the development of policies that address their unique challenges and aspirations,” she said.



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