



Handover Ceremony – Digitalization Equipment for the Magistrate Courts
Vera Hakim, UNDP Maldives Resident Representative ad interim

Wednesday, 7 July 2021

Honorable Ustaza Hisaan Hussain, Chairperson of JSC

Ustaza Aishath Rizna, Chief Judicial Administrator

Her Excellency Caron Rohsler, British High Commissioner to the Maldives

Ustaza Khadeeja Leena, GN. Judicial Sector Magistrate

Members from DJA

And those joining us virtually: Members of JSC, Magistrates, the team at the UK High Commission, and colleagues from UNDP.

Assalaamu Alaikum and a very good morning to you all! It is a pleasure to be with you today.

The COVID-19 crisis has posed emerging challenges to the justice sector all over the world. Now, more than ever, it has become crucial to ensure that justice institutions are responsive to the rights and needs of all people.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to first and foremost congratulate the *Maldives Judiciary* on the important strides you continue to take to ensure that even during pandemic-times, access to justice and rule of law prevails.

It would be remiss not to mention the key role the *Department of Judicial Administration* has particularly played in championing the agenda of modernizing the justice system, and decentralizing services for the people.

Embracing technology, especially in crises, ensures business continuity and uninterrupted and improved provision of vital judicial services. So that even the remotest island communities, and the most vulnerable populations, continue to access justice in a fair and consistent manner.

On behalf of UNDP, I am honoured to handover the digital equipment for the Magistrate Court today. This latest handover of ICT assets is made possible with the generous support of the *British High Commission in the Maldives*. We thank the *United Kingdom* for the longstanding support as one of our partners in development.

UNDP is honoured to be part of the digitalization process of the Judiciary. We support the Judiciary's agenda to introduce technological solutions. It will undoubtedly address geographical and accessibility challenges, and bridge the gap between the justice system and communities. This is especially important for those who are residing in outer islands, and those unable to attend court services physically due to various challenges.

This digital innovation support ensures access to justice for hard to reach and vulnerable populations, including access to legal aid and information, to comprehensive services for victims and survivors of violence, to protection of migrants and displaced populations. This is indeed a vital step towards increasing public confidence and belief in the judiciary and justice sector.

UNDP pays special attention to the benefits of innovation and digital disruption in this challenging time. Since the onset of the pandemic, UNDP has provided digitalization equipment to the Apex Courts in Male' and to key justice sector stakeholders such as the Prosecutor General's Office and the Attorney General's Office. From September 2020 to December 2020 alone, more than 11,000 online hearings were facilitated by the Judiciary with these new technological solutions in place.

Today's support will assist the magistrates and courts based in the atolls to significantly multiply the number of court hearings from last year, and further continue to provide judicial services to remote communities, while helping connect all the courts virtually.

UNDP will continue our support to digital disruption initiatives for the justice sector to ensure the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - particularly Goal 10 on Reduced Inequalities, and Goal 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

Before I conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge once again the British High Commission in the Maldives, and the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, for their continued support to the development of Maldives and the achievement of SDGs.

Working together with development partners, UNDP is fully committed to build on our support to national partners to assist the Maldives, in strengthening Democratic Governance, in transitioning to a Blue/Green economy, and in embracing social protection and digitalisation as a means of achieving the SDGs.

Together, we can Build Forward Better.

Shukriya. Stay safe and strong. Thank you.