



**Remarks by Ms. Vera Hakim, UNDP Maldives Resident Representative Ad Interim**  
**Launching Ceremony for Development Planning Handbook**

*20 June 2021, 1100-1130hrs, Via Zoom*

*Chief Executive Officer of Local Government Authority, Ms. Fathimath Afshan Latheef*

*Her Excellency Caron Röhsler - British High Commissioner to Maldives*

*And all the council members, staff and LGA colleagues joining us.*

- Assalaamu Alaikum and a very good morning to you all! It is a pleasure to be with you today.
- Together, over the past year and right up to today, we have been making our way through a very difficult time. We are not out of the woods yet from the COVID-19 crisis, but I am glad to say that the outlook is bright: recovery is gathering strength.
- It is with this positive mindset that we meet at this significant time, while we are at the cusp of planning ahead for the development of our island nation. It is time to make real progress.
- The next few months will be crucial, as you take on the important responsibility of developing your community's plans for development for the next five years.
- Achieving broadly shared prosperity for communities requires action from across society, from government policy to private-sector initiatives to the work everyone here does.
- Most importantly, to create real and lasting change, the voices and perspectives of both women and men are needed now more than ever. You must have an equal say in your own development.
- There is no better time than now.
- We have already made progress that is making a difference at the grassroots level all around the country.

- Just one example is the momentous occasion where Maldives for the first time in history, has elected 388 women to the local councils as decision makers in island communities.
- Accelerating transformative development in communities means dismantling barriers that hold people and progress back.
- Our aim here must be to ensure that every household, every neighborhood, everyone from Thuraakunu to Gan, and the nation as a whole, can contribute to a thriving Maldives for all of us.
- We must work together to ensure that the development plans are inclusive, sustainable, gender representative and equal.
- We must shape these plans for our communities that ensures peace and prosperity for people and the planet, and ultimately accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals – the SDGs.
- I want to wish you all the best for the role you will play in building your communities.
- Community development leaders have no shortage of commitment to their goals.
- With the insights you have provided over the past week, together with the people of your islands, as well as the opportunities to learn from the experiences of other communities, you will be better prepared and more successful in meeting the very difficult challenges you will face. Thank you for being here.
- UNDP will continue to do our part, and we appreciate the ways our work has intersected. Our support for the induction was made possible through the continued support of our partners, the Government of United Kingdom as well as the Local Government Authority. We would also like to express our gratitude to our consultant, Aishath Azfa for her expertise and contributions to this important work.
- Let's keep moving forward together.
- I would like to close by saying thank you. The work you have done and will do through this crisis is hard but essential. You will make people's lives better. There is no higher calling.
- Shukriya and stay safe.