

**10th Annual Meeting
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
24-26 August 2005**

Reports from other human rights institutions - Maldives

**Ms Rasheeda Ali
Secretary-General
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Madame Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen.

I wish to take this opportunity to briefly highlight the activities of the Commission during this year. In addition to investigating complaints:

The Commission published its first Annual Report, which contains information on complaints investigated, recommendations made to government and other activities from its establishment on 10 December 2003 till end December 2004;

In January, the government held general elections of parliament and the Commission monitored the election and published our finding. While noting some improvements in administrative arrangements, we said that the Commission cannot say that the elections were generally free and fair and without undue influence.

During late May, government announced that political parties would be allowed to register in Maldives shortly. In early June, 5 political parties were given permission to carry the necessary work required to apply for their registration. The Commission organized a public meeting titled "Human Rights in a Multi-party Democracy" and invited representatives from these five political parties to participate in a panel discussion during the meeting. They were invited to outline their human rights agendas.

With regard to the Commission's legislation, Human Rights Commission's Bill was re-submitted to the 1st session of the Parliament this year. After being debated, the Bill was sent to a sub-committee of the Parliament. The amended Bill was sent back to Parliament and passed on 21st July. The Commission had serious concerns about the passed legislation and these together with proposed amendments were sent to the President and parliament members, hoping that the President would not ratify the Bill, as he had the power to send it back to parliament within 30 days according to the constitution. However, the bill was ratified on 18th August and has come into force on that date.

On human rights education and increasing awareness, we have not had much success. The television and the radio are state owned and we do not get the opportunity to use them for awareness programmes. Most of our press releases are also not announced by state media. In our effort to ensure cooperation of the media, the Commission held meetings with Ministers of Information [we have had 3 separate Ministers so far].

We have just started a baseline study on human rights awareness and hope to complete it within the next two months.

I'm sure some of you would have heard about the recent incident, on 12th August. In connection with this incident many people were arrested and detained. The Commission visited these detainees on 18th August. On that date there were over 140 detainees, at three different detention centres. The Commission is currently preparing the report on the findings and will be making recommendations to the government, for urgent action.

Before I conclude, on behalf of the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives I would like to express our sincere thanks to APF for giving us the opportunity to attend this meeting; and the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia for their warm and gracious hospitality.

Thank you.