

Speech by
His Excellency Hussain Mohamed Latheef, Vice President of the
Maldives, at the Plenary Session
of the Second World Summit for Social Development (WSSD2)
3 November – 5 November 2025, Doha, Qatar

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Amir of the State of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin
Hamad Al Thani,
Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr António Guterres,
Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ.

We convened – in Beijing, in Berlin, and in Copenhagen,
to put our planet in order, in anticipation of a new century.

We pledged to make social development the foundation of peace,
prosperity, and dignity for all.

Thirty years later, a quarter into this century,
the challenges we once united to face, still stand before us:
women's rights are stalled and set back;
the climate crisis makes existing vulnerabilities worse;
and the pace of social development is far too slow.

In many developing countries, especially in SIDS like the Maldives,
our people are our strongest, and our most valuable asset.
Investing in our people is the key to our development.

We have made significant progress in advancing social
development, guided by our national priorities and the SDGs. We
have prioritized investments in healthcare, education, digital
transformation, and climate resilience.

True social progress depends on creating enough financial space to
invest in people, their resilience, and their opportunities.

This is why the Maldives has proposed an innovative way to
convert debt into tools for building resilience — transforming what

we owe into a shared investment with our partners in empowering people and creating a sustainable future together.

Such tools can help us strengthen social protection systems to support the most vulnerable; build infrastructure that protects our communities from the effects of climate change, and invest in digitalisation and technology to prepare the Maldives for a more inclusive and fair future.

Debt continues to block investments in essential policies.

In too many developing countries, especially in SIDS, we spend more on paying back debt than we do on health or education.

This is not development; it is constraint.

Social development policies, without consistency and financial space, cannot ensure that people feel safe, secure, and guaranteed of their rights:

the right to live with dignity, to access decent work, and to benefit from social protection.

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The Maldives continues to take a holistic approach to social development – addressing root causes with targeted solutions,

through accessible housing; youth-centred programmes and opportunities;

economic mobility and financial independence, affordable mental health and medical services; and efforts to eliminate structural barriers.

We have also shown leadership that supports the global agenda.

The Maldives has achieved universal old-age pensions through contributory and non-contributory schemes, and has established universal health coverage, ensuring that every Maldivian, regardless of income or geography, can access essential healthcare.

Our digital economy strategy aims to contribute 15% to GDP by 2030, empowering our youth and diversifying our economic base.

These achievements prove our belief that social protection is not just an aspiration; it is a right.

But social development cannot be achieved in isolation.

True progress in advancing social development can happen only by adopting a global strategy.

The international system and cooperation must work for everyone – even the smallest nations. We call upon the international

community to recognise the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS. But recognition alone is not enough – we need action. Social progress must also be sustainable.

In many developing countries, especially in SIDS like the Maldives, our people's resilience is being tested by heavy debt, the pressures of climate change, and limited resources for social investment.

That is why reforming the global system to create fiscal space for investment in people is central to our call for social justice and sustainability.

Since 1995, commitment and action to achieve social development have remained too often out of reach.

The Maldives remains committed to global solidarity and partnership. We believe that true progress in social development needs a global strategy – one that leaves no island behind.

We cannot let the hopes of Copenhagen fade away.

The historic Declaration must be renewed, and strengthened by the Doha Political Declaration, adopted at this Summit.

The social contract must be refreshed:

words must become commitment,

and commitment must become action.

The same unity that brought us together three decades ago can still guide us today – if we act now, with courage, compassion, and conviction.

I thank you.