



AN OUTLINE OF THE GOVERNMENT SYSTEM IN

MALDIVES



1 INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Maldives is a unitary state located in the Indian Ocean. It has a population of 369,031¹ on a land area of 300 sq km over 1,192 atolls of which 194 are inhabited. The highest point in the Maldives is less than two metres above sea level.²

The executive president is elected every five years by referendum following the

nomination of a single candidate by the legislature – the Citizens' Majlis. The cabinet is appointed by presidential choice from amongst the public.

The Citizens' Majlis is unicameral and comprises 50 members, two elected from each of the administrative units, also called atolls, and the capital Malé, and eight appointed by the president. Men and women are eligible to stand as candidates. There is universal suffrage for those 21 years of age and over. The term of office for the Majlis is up to five years.

There are 20 administrative units, known as atolls, and the city of Malé is the capital.

2 POLITICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MALDIVES

The most recent elections to the Citizens' Majlis were held in January 2005. The president was elected in October 2003.

2.1 Government administration

The structure of executive government is divided into the President's Office, the Attorney General's Office and over a dozen line ministries and associated entities to implement the programmes of the government, including a Ministry of Local Government

The 26 natural atolls of the Maldives archipelago are divided into 20 administrative regions also known as atolls. Each atoll is administered by an atoll chief appointed by the president.

The Ministry of Atolls Development has northern and southern regional offices which are collectively responsible to the president for atolls administration.

The administrative head of the island is the island chief, appointed by the Ministry of Atolls Development.

2.2 Position of local government in the state

In addition to the atoll administrations, Malé municipality functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs. It comprises four wards. Its mandate is to undertake planning and development of the municipality, manage and oversee the civil register, and be responsible for street cleaning, street lighting, markets, public facilities, cemeteries, waste disposal and the environment. The wards work in cooperation with government offices.

3 E-GOVERNMENT

The Maldives government has an informative, bilingual website. Latest statistics show that 20,100 people had access to the internet, representing 6.6% of the population.³

4 ENVISAGED REFORMS

The President of the Maldives announced a reform agenda in June 2004. The roadmap for this identifies a number of strategies to reinforce democratic processes for enhancing good governance. The agenda calls for strengthening atoll and island administrations through elected councils and the enactment of necessary laws to facilitate decentralisation. The Ministry has been engaging in consultations with the public and private sectors to design a system of decentralised local governance that caters to the needs of all the atolls' populations. A decentralisation study was undertaken in 2005 with UNDP assistance and a draft programme drawn up on the back of this. A Decentralisation Bill has been submitted, and capacity-building programmes launched to support its provisions.

References

- 1 CIA World Factbook 2007
- 2 7th National Development Plan, Ministry of Planning & National Development
- 3 www.internetworldstats.com.