

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**Speech by**  
**His Excellency Maumoon Abdul Gayoom,**  
**President of the Republic of Maldives,**  
**at the**  
**Function to Inaugurate the**  
**International Seminar on Youth Programme Development –**  
**Rover Section**  
**Monday, 17 April 2006**  
**Hulhule' Island Hotel**

*President of the Maldives' Scout Council, Dr. Mahmood Shougee, Chairman of the Asia Pacific Regional Committee, Mr. Eric Khoo, Deputy Secretary General of the World Scout Association, Mr. Dominic Bernard, Regional Director at the Asia Pacific Regional Office, Mr. Abdulla Rasheed, Chief Commissioner of the Scout Association of Maldives, Mr. Ahmed Ali Maniku, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen;*

Rain seems to be a popular topic among speakers this morning. In many cultures, rain is regarded as a blessing, including our own. I think even in our Islamic tradition, rain, which is the main source of water, is regarded as a blessing, for God Almighty says, “وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ” “We had created from water every living thing.” And I don't think that rain contradicts our tourism slogan, “Maldives – The Sunny Side of Life” because with that we don't mean only the fine weather or the blue skies that we enjoy most of the year. More importantly, we mean the goodwill and the friendship to everybody that is in our hearts. It means the sunshine that is in our hearts.

It gives me great pleasure to inaugurate this International Seminar on Youth Programme Development of the Rover Section. I extend a very warm welcome to all the distinguished delegates from various segments of the global scouting family. I hope that this Seminar will be of great benefit to all participants and that your stay here in the Maldives, enjoying the sunny side of life, will be a memorable one.

Let me also express my sincere appreciation to all of you for presenting me with the prestigious Scouting Badge Card, a short while ago. I am greatly honoured by this recognition.

May I also congratulate Mr. Mohamed Waheed Deen on being presented with the APR Foundation Gold Palm. Mr. Deen's services and philanthropic activities need no elaboration. It therefore comes as no surprise to me that Mr. Deen has been presented with this award.

*Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen;*

The World Scout Movement is nearing its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. 2007 is therefore going to be a year of great significance for scouts across the world.

Today, scouting is the largest youth movement in the world, and there are 28 million scouts active in 216 different countries and territories.

I understand that many important events have been proposed for the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of scouting by its founder, Lord Baden Powell. The knowledge that scouts representing the Maldives will be

participating in many of these events is a source of great pleasure for me. In particular, the participation of Maldivian scouts at the 21<sup>st</sup> World Scout Jamboree – to be held at the birthplace of scouting – is indeed a noteworthy achievement.

*Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen;*

The scout movement has long been an integral part of child and youth development in the Maldives. We are a young nation with an even younger population. With the present emphasis on nurturing our future generation to take on the responsibilities of the nation, the values and skills that scouting brings with it are more important for us today than ever before. The growth of the movement in the Maldives must be sustained through the adoption of effective policies and the implementation of practical measures.

It is indeed most fitting that an international seminar of such high stature and importance is being hosted by the Maldives to coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of scouting in the country. I am certain that the pioneers of scouting in the Maldives, way back in 1956, would not have foreseen that the movement would reach such heights in such a short period of time.

These achievements would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of generation after generation of scout leaders and scouts. We have been lucky to have had many distinguished and inspirational Chief Commissioners over the years. The services of Mr. Hassan Ali Didi, Mr. Ahmed Zaki, Mr. Ahmed Shathir, Mr. Abdulla Rasheed, Mr. Ismail Shafeeq

and our present Chief Commissioner Mr. Ahmed Ali Maniku, must be remembered on an occasion such as this.

I wish to also thank Dr. Mahmood Shougee, the President of the Scout Council, and all his predecessors, for their important contribution in developing scouting in the Maldives.

Speaking of Dr. Shougee, I would like to thank him for the very kind words that he had addressed to me during his remarks. I also thank Mr. Abdulla Rasheed for the very kind sentiments that he had expressed towards me.

The members of staff at the Scout Association of Maldives, our scout leaders, scouts and their parents and guardians also deserve sincere thanks for their efforts in the development of scouting in the country.

*Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen;*

Today, there are registered scout groups across the Maldives, including 98 schools. There are now 4,300 scouts, and 300 scout leaders to guide them. Also, there are girl scouts in the Maldives, which is an important milestone identified by the world governing bodies as well.

The Maldives may be a small country, but, over the years, we have been actively participating in jamborees, and camps held across the world. I also note that a number of Maldivians have served on international and regional committees of the world scouting bodies.

It is a matter of great pleasure for the Maldives that a Maldivian scout is today serving as the scout movement's Asia

Pacific Regional Director. Mr. Abdulla Rasheed, who is here today, has made the country proud.

Another Maldivian scout who has made us proud is Riaayath Abdul Majeed, who, a couple of years ago, was selected among the three top scouts of the Asia Pacific Region. This, in my view, is a remarkable feat for a young man from one of the smallest countries in the region.

Speaking of pride, I'm proud to be the Chief Scout of this country. I'm also proud to be wearing the Scout tie this morning.

I believe that such achievements, that I have just mentioned are a true reflection of the importance that the Government and the people of the Maldives have accorded to scouting. Therefore, I am confident that scouting will go from strength to strength in this country, and that the visions of the scout movement in the Maldives, which includes increasing the number of scouts to 15,000 by the year 2015, will become a reality.

There is nothing that a dedicated scout is incapable of achieving, with the grace of the Almighty Allah. After all, the movement's very aim is to build well-prepared young men and women, who are fully equipped with the necessary life skills to lead a successful and rewarding life. That is why scouting is so special.

*Thank you!*