



## \$8.5 Million Invested in Maldives Integrated Water Resource Project

### Government and UNDP sign project to deliver climate smart freshwater solutions for communities

**Male', December 15, 2011:** The Ministry of Housing and Environment and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has signed a project today to invest USD 8.5 million, towards an initiative that will bring fresh water to communities on the densely populated islands of Haa Alif Ihavandhoo, Alif Dhaalu Mahibadhoo and Gaafu Dhaalu Gadhdhoo, with a view on country-wide replication and upscaling in the future. The financial resources for this project come from the Adaptation Fund under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The project will be implemented jointly by the Government, UNDP and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

Presiding at the signing ceremony, Mohamed Aslam, Minister of Housing and Environment, stated that while all the islands of Maldives have clean water related issues, these three islands were chosen after a stringent selection criteria, primarily based on their populations and the severity of water scarcity. He further said that this project will bring in an integrated water resource system.

The funds will pay for the establishment of integrated and resilient water supply systems; increase total freshwater storage capacity; and improve the quality of harvested rainwater in the target islands. Similarly, communal rainwater storage schemes will be strengthened, and additional production capacity for desalinated freshwater will be installed to provide backup capacity in times of water stress. Artificial groundwater recharge will be enhanced to improve the quality and quantity of water stored in the natural aquifer, and contamination of household effluents will be reduced to prevent damages to the sensitive reef ecosystem.

"Access to water is a fundamental human right, and considering the hardships communities face accessing fresh water in the country, this project will provide clean water to more than 6700 people over the coming months," said Sanaka Samarasinha, Officer-in-Charge of UNDP.

At the best of times, water is scarce in the islands due to climate change-induced decline of freshwater resources that is affecting the entire country. Furthermore, with the exception of Male', Vilingili and Hulhumale', inhabited islands in the country do not have a functioning water supply and distribution network that can ensure sufficient supply of safe freshwater during dry periods. The key problems pertaining to freshwater security relate to the management of increasingly saline groundwater and increasingly variable rainfall patterns.

The project will provide a compound solution to a number of critical climate and non-climate-related problems and will be a suitable model for replication on other islands with similar vulnerabilities.

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