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Joint Press Statement

Today, the International Human Rights Day concludes the Thinakun Ekeh campaign by the Gender Advocacy Working Group (GAWG) to mark the 16 days of activism for the elimination of violence against women. This year's campaign commenced on 25 November 2013 with the launching of billboards in more than 100 islands with the theme: Thinakun Ekeh – Bodu Kusheh (One in Three – Grave Offense), highlighting the fact that domestic violence is an offense that has consequences for the entire society. Other events during the 16 days included media appearances and a public discussion on women's participation in public life.

GAWG welcomes the ratification of the Domestic Violence Act in 2012. However, we are deeply concerned with the inadequate measures taken by the state towards its implementation. GAWG calls upon the state to take the necessary measures to allow for the effective implementation of the Act, including the strengthening of existing mechanisms, optimal utilization of available resources and improved coordination between institutions to provide services to survivors of domestic violence.

GAWG believes that there is no excuse for violence against women and has zero tolerance towards all forms of violence against women. Hence, GAWG urges all actors to immediately address and challenge justifications for oppression and violence against women, through effective education and awareness campaigns.

We believe that issues related to violence against women could be addressed effectively only through increased representation of women in all levels of society including decision-making. With the local council and the parliamentary elections coming up, GAWG would like to urge all political parties and state authorities to create incentives to eliminate the barriers for women to fully participate in public life in the Maldives. GAWG encourages women to contest for public office.

Reminding the state of its commitments under the various international and regional instruments on women's and girl's human rights, GAWG would like to reiterate the assertion from the preamble of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), that "...violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men,". Thus, violence against women, not only is an obstacle to the full realization of women's human rights, but it is also an impediment to economic growth, development, peace and social progress.

GAWG calls upon everyone (men and women) to challenge such patriarchal beliefs, and stand up for eliminating violence against women and girl's. We believe that each and every one can make a difference.

----The End ----

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