

# **Maldivian Democratic Party**

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## **Press Statement**

**For Immediate Release**

10<sup>th</sup> June, 2004

The Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) welcomes Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's latest call for democratic reform through constitution change. Most Maldivians have long accepted that unchecked power, concentrated in a despotic ruler for too long (over a quarter century in this case), diminishes the scope for liberal democracy. We welcome Gayoom's claim that he now understands this simple truism. Keeping true to the spirit of the constitution he now advocates, we feel that it will be most appropriate for him and beneficial to the Maldives if he would step down from the post of President of the Republic of Maldives, as soon as the new constitution is passed.

Gayoom could also back his stated good intentions with other tangible actions. We suggest he starts by showing greater respect for the rule of law. He must cease, with immediate effect, his continuing abuse of fundamental rights. Such rights include the right not to be oppressed, the right to a fair trial and freedom of expression, association, and movement.

For the people of Maldives and the international community to take his offer of constitutional reform seriously, Gayoom, his Attorney General, his judges and his National Security Service need to stop their open – often casual – abuse of the existing constitution. We submit that a new constitution, however perfect, would be of little use to the people of Maldives if Gayoom and the coercive force backing him are not prepared to honour such a constitution. The MDP would enthusiastically back any serious attempt at introducing a liberal, democratic political culture in the Maldives.