



**Introduction by  
The Rt Hon Lord Hurd  
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Chairman of the FIRST  
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**T**he 50th Anniversary of the independence of the Maldives is an important landmark to celebrate and the people and leadership of the Maldives should be congratulated on this achievement. The Maldives is an Islamic Republic located off the Indian subcontinent and is composed of an archipelago of some 1200 islands – many uninhabited. With an economy based on tourism, the country has developed its infrastructure and industries (especially fishing) as well as healthcare, education and literacy.

We at FIRST are delighted to publish this official report on the Maldives to mark the 50th Anniversary and extend our thanks to the Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation for all their help and encouragement.

The United Kingdom has a long-term relationship with the Maldives. A sultanate since the twelfth century, the Maldives became a British protectorate in 1887. The Maldives gained independence in 1965 and subsequently became a republic in 1968.

The Maldivian economy is dominated by tourism which accounts for nearly 30 per cent of GDP and more than 60 per cent of foreign exchange receipts. Fishing is an important economic component with agriculture and manufacturing playing a lesser role. GDP stands at US\$4.254 billion and the GDP real growth rate in 2014 stood at 4.5 per cent with GDP per capita at US\$12,400. The government's strategy is

to diversify the economy away from tourism and fishing as well as attracting foreign investment via the creation of special economic zones.

The United Kingdom has a wide range of shared interests with the Maldives – especially in the areas of climate change, countering Islamic radicalisation and economic issues. Maldivian officials have long played an important role in global climate change discussions – given that none of the islands lies more than six feet above sea level – resulting in extreme vulnerability to rising sea levels associated with global warming.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) is an active contributor to the development of the Maldives. Much of the United Kingdom's development assistance is channelled through a number of multilateral agencies including the United Nations, World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Following the Tsunami of 2004 DFID pledged £50 million in aid which was directed at the provision of humanitarian relief supplies.

The 50th Anniversary of Maldives' Independence provides an opportunity to acknowledge the economic development of the country and to weigh carefully the opportunities for further cooperation. We at FIRST are delighted to have been asked to produce this official publication and hope that it contributes, in a small way, to the celebrations marking this important Anniversary. **E**