

## **Press statement on the opening of polls for the 2018 Presidential Election**

**23 September 2018**

Transparency Maldives observer network has a wide national coverage spanning Malé and the atolls, resorts, industrial islands and prisons, as well as abroad in Colombo, Sri Lanka. We thank the nearly 400 observers and volunteers deployed across the country for their dedication in observing and assisting in the election observation processes.

In observing the 2018 Presidential Election, Transparency Maldives is assessing both the election-day proceedings and have monitored the larger electoral and political environment during the pre-election period. The results we report from our observation are generalisable to the entire country. The following results are based on the observation at the time of opening of polls.

The opening procedure went well with 97% of all polling stations open by 8:30 am and 66% of polling stations open within the first 10 minutes of the required opening time.

Nearly all polling station officials were properly in place at all polling stations.

The materials required for voting were present, the ballot papers were counted and reconciled at all polling stations, and all ballot boxes were verified as empty at the start.

Candidates were well represented at polling stations. Two or more candidate/party observers were present at 70% of all observed polling stations. One candidate/party observer was present at 20% of polling stations whilst no candidate/party observer was present in 7% of cases.

Transparency Maldives also notes that police were present outside 97% of the observed polling stations at the opening time.

Observers concluded that the polling stations were set up to ensure a secret vote in the vast majority of cases (99%). This was less clear in about 1% of all cases observed. These polling stations will be closely watched.

We encourage all parties to maintain peace. Our observers are working hard at polling stations and will be present at the polling stations till closing.

We will be informing you the precise time of our next press conference later this afternoon.

ENDS

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