

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION
MALÉ, MALDIVES

STATEMENT ON THE DIVING INCIDENT IN VAAVU ATOLL

MALÉ, 16 MAY 2026

The Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation extends our deepest condolences to the families of the five Italian nationals affected by the tragic diving incident in Vaavu Atoll, Maldives on 14 May 2026. We also extend our sincere condolences to the family, colleagues and loved ones of Staff Sergeant Mohamed Mahdi of the Maldives National Defence Force, who lost his life during the subsequent search and rescue operation. His dedication to duty and the sacrifice he made in service to others will not be forgotten. Our thoughts are with all those affected during this deeply difficult time.

The incident involved five Italian nationals, four tourists and a diving instructor, who had gone diving from the tourist vessel MV Duke of York. We are deeply saddened to confirm that the body of the diving instructor has been recovered. Search and rescue operations for the four missing tourists remain ongoing. Relevant authorities remain in close coordination with the affected families and diplomatic representatives.

His Excellency President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu and Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation Mohamed Ameen visited the site to oversee operations firsthand, and the Maldives National Defence Force and Coast Guard are treating this as their highest priority. We also express our deepest appreciation to all personnel involved in this operation for their courage and commitment under extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

In response to the incident, the Ministry has suspended the operating licence of MV Duke of York pending a thorough investigation. All necessary action will be taken to ensure full accountability, and tourism businesses and service providers will continue to be held to the standards required of them.

