

HIGH-LEVEL GROUP ON JUSTICE FOR WOMEN



BACKGROUND NOTE

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are key to achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Women and girls play a critical role in the creation and maintenance of peaceful, just and inclusive societies. In turn, having peaceful, just and inclusive societies is an essential prerequisite for gender equality, thus reinforcing the close link between SDGs 5 and 16. Access to justice – an important dimension of the rule of law – is an especially critical element in the realization of the rights of women and girls. In this context, under the umbrella of the Pathfinders Initiative for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, a High-level Group on Justice for Women has been established to advocate for the prioritization of women’s justice needs in the lead up to the 2019 High-level Political Forum and beyond.

The Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies is an initiative spearheaded by the Governments of Brazil, Sierra Leone and Switzerland to turn the ambition of the SDG targets for peaceful, just and inclusive societies into reality. The initiative is facilitated by the New York University Center on International Cooperation (CIC) and has attracted the support of governments, international organizations and global partnerships.

In September 2017, the Pathfinders launched the Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, as a ‘first guide’ for those working on the SDG targets for peace, justice and inclusion (SDG16+). The roadmap identifies

[Equal and effective justice for women and girls forms the basis of more sustainable and inclusive patterns of development, and is essential to achieve the aspirational goal of the 2030 Agenda to reach the furthest behind.](#)

increased access to justice and legal empowerment as priorities for national implementation. It also identifies the need to further explore the challenge of providing justice to the four billion people who live outside the protection of the rule of law. The roadmap emphasizes that without increased justice, it will be impossible to deliver the 2030 Agenda commitments for people, planet, prosperity and peace.

Gender equality and human rights are at the heart of the roadmap’s path to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The roadmap calls for action on gender equality and empowerment, and for concerted efforts to tackle the epidemic of violence experienced by women and girls.

To encourage acceleration in the provision of justice to people and communities outside the protection of the law, the Pathfinders Initiative has established a Task Force on Justice, co-chaired by the Ministers of Justice of Argentina, Netherlands and Sierra Leone. In line with SDG16.3 and related targets on justice, the Task Force is working towards the following outcomes:

- Governments (national or subnational) make ambitious commitments to implement SDG16.3, backed up by credible, realistic, and funded strategies and plans.
- Increasingly coherent and comprehensive support for the implementation of SDG16.3 from international and regional organizations, and from multi-stakeholder partnerships.
- A more effective and empowered movement for justice at global, regional, national and local levels.

The Task Force will identify the scale of the justice gap, make the case for action and investment in justice through strategies, tools and approaches that will increase access and act as a platform for increased local, national, regional, and international commitments to implement SDG16.3 and related targets from a gender perspective.

The High-level Group on Justice for Women

Building on the work of the Task Force, the High-level Group on Justice for Women will develop concrete recommendations on access to justice for women and girls, as an input to the work of the Task Force on Justice. The High-level Group (HLG) will address the following questions:

- **Addressing the justice gap for women and girls.** What do women and girls need and want when they seek justice? Are the justice needs of women and girls being comprehensively addressed across their life cycle and in challenging circumstances such as during conflict and in post-conflict situations? What is the impact of gender discriminatory legal frameworks and social norms, as well as gender bias, on the delivery of justice for women?
- **Understanding what works.** What strategies, tools and approaches are likely to increase access to justice for women and girls? How can legal, policy and fiscal reforms be scaled-up and accelerated in their favor? How can discriminatory social norms and gender bias be addressed in formal and informal justice systems?
- **Making the case.** What impact will women's increased access to justice have on reducing violence and ensuring access to economic resources and basic services such as land, credit, sexual and reproductive health and education? What is the case for action and investment in access to justice for women and girls and how can this be done effectively?
- **Call to action.** What commitments should national and local actors make to close the justice gap for women and girls? How can international and regional cooperation support access to justice for women and girls at national levels? What can be done in the immediate, short to long term?

The HLG will focus on the unmet need for justice of women in all countries, in line with the universal approach of the 2030 Agenda. It will also highlight access to justice for women in the most vulnerable communities and countries, including those affected by conflict or humanitarian crises.

The list of members will be circulated separately.

UN Women, the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) and the New York University Center on International Cooperation (CIC) will serve as Secretariat for the High-level Group.

Working Modalities

1. The High-level Group will hold its inaugural meeting in The Hague on 28 and 29 May, 2018.
2. Subsequent meetings will be held electronically, including at the technical level.
3. An input paper will be developed to support the group's deliberations. The High-level Group will provide guidance and insights to the report drafting team, on areas of emphasis and consideration.

Timeline

- **October 2018:** Draft report for consideration at a virtual meeting of the High-level Group
- **January 2019:** Final report of the High-level Group
- **March to September 2019:** The report will be launched during the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and will also contribute to the launch of the report of the Task Force on Justice during the July 2019 High-level Political Forum, and culminate with activities around the 2019 General Assembly.

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