

## THE RULE OF LAW IN TURBULENT TIMES

IDLO PARTNERSHIP FORUM  
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Leaving no one behind. That was what inspired the United Nations Member States to adopt the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. These Global Goals address the challenges the world faces, including those related to eradicating poverty, advancing gender equality and peace and justice. The 17 goals interconnect and are geared to achieve their respective targets by 2030.

2019 will see the first quadrennial assessment of the Global Goals, hence this year's IDLO Partnership Forum is a timely opportunity for a candid stocktaking of the progress being made in advancing the Goals. The outcomes of the Forum's dialogues will feed into the global Task Force on Justice deliberations and the United Nations High-Level Political Forum in July 2019.

The objective of the IDLO Partnership Forum is to stimulate and strengthen dialogue among policy makers, academia and development practitioners around our mission to create a world where everyone lives with dignity and under the rule of law. In particular it will focus on the strides made and obstacles encountered in advancing Goal 16 towards just, peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and the rule of law.

Advances in this respect are significant and should be built on. At the same time, challenges are increasingly emerging, across regions as well as legal systems, some of which challenge the very principles that underlie the Global Goals and their transformational targets: respect for human rights, multilateralism and international solidarity, and an equitable rules-based system.

The themes of this year's Forum build on shared experiences between IDLO, our Member Parties and our partners in implementing rule of law and access to justice programs. They address key dimensions of the rule of law to enable a focused discussion of the implications of developments and trends that characterize the current international environment.

## **Opening Session: The Catalyst Role of Global Goal 16**

The Opening Session will frame both the opportunities but also the major challenges presented at this current time and suggest ways in which we can capitalize the potential catalyst role of Goal 16 in accelerating progress on sustaining peace and sustainable development through access to justice and the rule of law.

### **Theme 1: Building Trust and Confidence in Institutions**

Strong, well-functioning justice institutions, whether formal or informal, are crucial for just, peaceful and inclusive societies and a bulwark against fragility and instability. Yet, there is a growing gap in institutional legitimacy in countries across the development spectrum. The stresses placed by global crises and disruptive trends on international and domestic systems, the suborning of laws and institutions to advance the interests of the powerful and growing anger at inequality, corruption and lack of accountability have combined to undermine public confidence.

The session will examine different approaches to strengthen the integrity and accountability of institutions through interventions to promote judicial independence, combat corruption and make governance more open, transparent and efficient. It will also address the importance of building public trust in institutions by increasing their responsiveness and cooperation with those they serve, including through direct engagement, working with civil society and bridging the gap between formal and informal justice systems.

### **Theme 2: Rule of law in a changing global economy**

Trade and entrepreneurship are a powerful engine for development and have lifted over a billion people out of poverty around the world. However, these gains are increasingly offset by the disruptive changes in traditional economies and livelihoods. The geographic rebalancing of the global economy, a growing awareness of the emergence of new actors and the impact of hyper-connectedness, generate both extraordinary challenges and opportunities for sustainable development.

Against these trends that will shape the future of trade, commerce and dispute resolution globally, this session will look at ways countries at different stages of development can respond through strengthening their legal, commercial and arbitration frameworks and institutional capacity and by empowering entrepreneurs. It will explore ways to promote an inclusive and innovative vision of development by promoting partnerships with new actors, including countries from the Global South and the private sector, and capitalizing on emerging trends and technologies to achieve and sustain development.

### **Theme 3: Closing the Justice Gap for Women**

Access to justice - a critical component of Goal 16 - is not only a goal in itself but also a means to realizing Goal 5 on gender equality. Both goals are also essential enablers for advancing all Global Goals. Women and girls continue to face significant structural barriers to full equality ranging from discriminatory laws and customs, unresponsive institutions and exclusion from leadership and decision-making positions. While there has been progress towards closing this 'gap', it has been slow, uneven and subject to setbacks.

The session will highlight ways of accelerating the achievement of more equitable outcomes for women and girls in political, economic and social spheres, with a view to closing the justice gap for women. It will look at the effectiveness of approaches such as increasing the gender-responsiveness and representation of women in institutions, legal empowerment, strategic advocacy and civil society engagement. The discussion will pay particular attention to the needs of the women left furthest behind and ways in which the law can help them fully realize their rights and aspirations.