
REPORT OF THE BOARD OF ADVISERS

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY OF PARTIES

30 November 2022

Board Composition

In 2022, the Board of Advisers of IDLO included the following eight members: Mr. Stefano Manservisi (Chair), Dr. Ruth Aura-Odhiambo, Mr. Hassane Cisse, H.E. Mehmet Hasan Gögüş, Dr. Hoang Ly Anh, Prof. Githu Muigai, Mr. Patrick O'Brien and Ms. Zhou Xiaoyan.

Board's Advisory Role

In accordance with IDLO's governing documents, the Board serves an advisory function within the Organization. Members of the Board serve in their individual capacities as experts in matters of the rule of law and development.

Board Activities

On 12-13 September 2022, the Board held its annual meeting in-person for the first time since 2019 at IDLO Headquarters.

The Chair and five members of the Board travelled to Rome to participate in the meeting, (the list of participants is herewith attached in Annex 1).

In order to stimulate and focus the discussions, IDLO's Director-General briefed the Board members on progress in the implementation of IDLO's Strategic Plan and how the Organization was continuing to make its contribution in the current complex global environment. Other members of IDLO's Senior Leadership Team also provided updates on IDLO programming; policy and advocacy; research and learning; and engagement with partners, and a consultation was held with the Board on IDLO's draft Climate Justice Strategy.

The Board meeting was opened by the Chair, Mr. Stefano Manservisi, who expressed his pleasure at being able to hold an in-person meeting with his colleagues, following two years of online meetings, due to pandemic-related restrictions.

- In his opening remarks, the Chair underlined IDLO's unique mandate as the only organization focused exclusively on SDG16 that works using a bottom-up and top-down approach to promote peace, sustainable development and access to justice.
- He also stressed the importance of partnerships, particularly in today's climate where multilateralism is increasingly under attack.

- The Chair invited the Board members to reflect on how they might best contribute to strengthening IDLO's messaging and increasing its visibility.
- The Director-General welcomed the Board members to Rome, echoing the Chair's remarks about the importance of being able to finally meet in person. She introduced several members of her Senior Management Team who would be providing updates to the Board on their respective areas to spark discussion and seek the Board's views.
- She described some of the challenges of past two years, highlighting IDLO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic; noting how the Organization had moved swiftly into crisis mode, finalizing business continuity plans and adapting its programming, while always maintaining staff safety and security as a top priority.
- The Director-General referred to the conflict scenarios which had affected IDLO's activities in several countries of operation, including Afghanistan, Myanmar, the Sahel and Ukraine. She updated the Board on the current status and the progress made, including the resumption of operations in Afghanistan.
- Noting how the post-pandemic recovery and the various economic, military and social crises were all closely interlinked, she reported that IDLO's Strategic Plan had performed well in the face of such challenges, with the relevance of IDLO's mandate further reinforced.
- The Director-General highlighted a number of issues, including IDLO's growing portfolio of work on anticorruption, the increased focus on strengthening partnerships and expanding membership, and the advocacy goal of positioning IDLO as the partner of choice on SDG16 in major global forums.
- The update on IDLO programmes provided the Board with a broad overview of IDLO's full portfolio of programming, including details of the breakdown by region and strategic objective, as well as key examples from the various regions.
- Board members acknowledged the immense challenges of working in fragile environments such as Afghanistan and applauded IDLO for remaining in the country when many other organizations had left.
- The update on IDLO's Policy and Advocacy activities explained the rationale for such work, namely, to help mobilize political and financial support for the rule of law. The discussion touched on examples of IDLO's integrated approach, through which advocacy is informed by both research and programming and in turn seeks to amplify IDLO's messaging and draw greater attention to the rule of law.

- The global SDG16 Conference and the since concluded East Africa Justice Week were cited as important examples of IDLO's convening power and ability to bring together a range of voices from governments, international organizations and civil society for an exchange of dialogue and ideas.
- Given the broad range of IDLO's audiences, the Board underscored the importance of IDLO's messaging being tailored to address specific target audiences.
- During the update on research and learning, the Board underlined the importance of bridging the gap between the formal and informal justice sectors and congratulated IDLO for its work on customary and informal justice.
- The Board also expressed strong support for IDLO's work on justice for women and girls, highlighting how evidence has shown that wherever women are empowered and engaged in decision-making, society has grown and moved forward.
- The consultation on IDLO's Draft Climate Justice Strategy sparked significant interest on the part of the Board members who were supportive of IDLO's efforts to position itself as a pioneer in the area of climate justice. Other issues raised in this context included the question of legal identity and the problem of statelessness, economic migration, and conflicts related to access to land, food and water. The Board also welcomed IDLO's focus on assisting governments to be better prepared and more resilient to face future crises.
- The discussions on Day 2 of the Board meeting focused on engagement with partners. Board members were given an overview of the partnership strategy currently under development, including a stakeholder mapping exercise. IDLO's main target groups of stakeholders were outlined, and attention drawn to those considered high priority, in particular youth.
- The presentation also highlighted the importance placed on expanding IDLO's membership, though it was underlined that while IDLO's membership process is a relatively straightforward one, there are often factors beyond the Organization's control that can delay the process of countries joining.
- Reference was made also to IDLO's resource mobilization strategy, which aims to strike a balance between securing core and programmatic funding, as well as identifying new partners from non-traditional sectors.
- The Board expressed interest in IDLO's efforts to secure private sector funding, with individual members offering to provide assistance with outreach and introductions. The Board encouraged IDLO to consider drawing up a set of ethical standards and guidelines in this regard.
- Board members also raised the issue of partnering with academic institutions and invited IDLO to call on them for potential training activities or academic exchanges, including as speakers for events or joint research activities.

- The Board was briefed on the importance of IDLO securing appropriate legal recognition in its countries of operation, primarily to reduce legal and financial risks for IDLO and its staff, and received an update on the status of negotiations to secure Host Country Agreements.

Before concluding the meeting, the Chair of the Board summarized the main ideas and suggestions that had been put forward by the members. During the discussions, Board members had used a variety of terms to describe IDLO, including: “thought leader in everything to do with rule of law”; “problem solver”; “pioneer in new frontier areas”; the “premier international rule of law institution”; and an “adaptable and nimble player that can pilot approaches and test boundaries”.

Comments and suggestions proposed by the Board for IDLO’s consideration included the following:

- Explore the idea of appointing IDLO “Justice Ambassadors” to help raise the Organization’s profile [alternative suggestions were “IDLO Friends” or “Justice Champions”];
- Undertake a due diligence exercise and draw up ethical standards and guidelines for accepting private sector funding;
- Explore increased opportunities for potential collaboration with international law firms and bar associations;
- Consider engaging with regional organisations such as the East Africa Community and the South African Development Community, for the purpose of membership expansion;
- Reflect on the use of new technology and how it might be exploited to a greater degree to help IDLO reach wider audiences;
- Continue working, so long as circumstances permit, in challenging environments such as Afghanistan and Ukraine;
- Continue working in the area of climate justice and position IDLO as a pioneer in this area at the next COP27 and other global fora;
- Explore options for increased engagement with the EU, including with the various EU bodies, including the Council, the Commission etc.;
- Continue to strengthen relations with the UN system and potentially consider the pros and cons of becoming a specialized UN agency or of securing a special relationship agreement with the UN.

The Chair ended the meeting by informing members he would attend the forthcoming Assembly of Parties meeting on 30 November in Rome, during which he would represent the Board and also present the Board’s annual report to the Assembly.

The Board agreed to reconvene in 2023.

ENDS/