

STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

40TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: GENERAL SEGMENT

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Delivered by Julian Fleet, Permanent Observer to the United Nations in Geneva

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is a privilege for me to address the Human Rights Council on behalf of the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), the only intergovernmental organization exclusively devoted to advancing the rule of law and access to justice.

As many speakers have noted, human rights and rule of law are under threat in countries in every region of the world.

Yet, these are also times of opportunity. Never before has there been so much potential for rule of law to contribute to human rights, peace and sustainable development agendas.

IDLO works in some of the poorest and most insecure parts of the world, as well as in middle income countries.

As a field-based intergovernmental organization, we can report many examples of progress on the ground in advancing the rule of law and development. Governments and civil society are moving towards Sustainable Development Goal 16 and strengthening rule of law, both as a right in itself and as a critical enabler to operationalize human rights, peace and sustainable development and to pave the way -- in law and in practice -- for the achievement of each of the other SDGs.

This is not to say that there is no room for improvement or that we do not also face major challenges, but it shows that investment in capacity-building, backed by political commitment, can set a pathway to stronger institutions and to change.

While much has been achieved, much more remains to be done. The major challenges facing the world today – of economic and social inequalities, violent conflicts, and climate change – represent failures of human rights and rule of law.

Independent judiciaries, so essential to ensuring equality before the law, accountability and justice, are threatened in many places.

Let us also recall that most people in the developing world turn not to formal courts, but to customary and traditional legal systems to resolve their disputes. Based on our extensive

field experience and research in countries, we are launching global consultations to strengthen engagement with customary and informal systems as a pathway to justice for women, minority populations, and for many poor and marginalized people. IDLO welcomes the participation of all delegations and stakeholders in this consultative process. The dialogue will focus on the relationship between formal and informal justice systems, as well as challenges that customary justice may pose to gender equality and other international human rights issues.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development integrates access to justice, the rule of law and its underlying principles of equality, inclusion, transparency and accountability, in SDG 16 and other goals. IDLO looks forward to the High-Level Political Forum in July and its review of SDG 16 and other key Goals through the lens of “*Empowering people and ensuring equality and inclusiveness.*” We are also pleased to be co-organizing with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) a high-level conference dedicated to advancing SDG 16, to be hosted in Rome by the Government of Italy in late May.

Mr. President,

In recent years, IDLO has increased its cooperation with both the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

IDLO is pleased to be exploring jointly with OHCHR opportunities to further strengthen the institutional partnership between our organizations to support governments, human rights defenders and justice champions to address inequalities and promote rule of law.

If the world is to realize the vision of peaceful, inclusive and prosperous societies, the Council must retain and reinforce its leading role and intensify its efforts to encourage governments and their partners to respect and to strengthen the rule of law, and to build the capacity of the justice sector at national and local levels, in the service of human rights, peace and sustainable development.

Thank you.

The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) enables governments and empowers people to reform laws and strengthen institutions to promote peace, justice, sustainable development and economic opportunity.