

## STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

### LAUNCH OF CEDAW GENERAL RECOMMENDATION NO. 35 ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, UPDATING GENERAL RECOMMENDATION NO. 19

Room XVI, Palais des Nations

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*Delivered by Mr. Julian Fleet, IDLO Permanent Observer to the United Nations and other  
International Organizations in Geneva*

#### Check against delivery

Madam Moderator,  
Distinguished panelists and delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) welcomes the launch of the CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence (GBV) against women, which provides clear conceptual guidance to policy makers and greatly contributes to prevent GBV and to strengthen protection of women and girls in countries and communities around the world.

In particular, IDLO commends CEDAW for highlighting the linkages between Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality and empowerment and SDG 16. We believe that successful efforts to promote rule of law and access to justice, as envisaged under SDG 16, are key to achieving the operational targets under SDG 5.

The rule of law is a powerful mechanism - indeed, an essential condition - for ending gender-based violence against women and girls. IDLO promotes the rule of law by supporting good governance, constitutional and law reform, enabling access to justice, helping to strengthen judicial and other justice sector institutions, and advancing sustainable development.

For many women, legal protection remains a mirage. Gender-based violence is one of the most pervasive forms of discrimination against women and takes many forms: sexual assault, domestic violence, gender-based killings, forced and early marriages. Risks for women and girls are heightened in times of conflict; violence perpetrated against them is often justified in the name of culture, religion and tradition.

The rule of law provides the primary tools that States have at their disposal to ensure protection from violence and discrimination. These include adopting laws that embody equality, abolishing laws and practices that foster violence and discrimination, imposing sanctions to prohibit discrimination, and establishing and strengthening competent and, where needed, specialized tribunals and institutions.

As suggested in our written submission, IDLO believes that the impact of General Recommendation 35 is enhanced, among others, by the way in which it:

- highlights the legal and justice sector responses to GBV;
- elaborates the linkages between justice, protection and support services; and
- promotes strategic engagements with customary and other informal justice systems.

IDLO works extensively with governments and other partners to prevent GBV and to promote GBV justice on the ground.

- In **Afghanistan**, IDLO is working to improve access to justice by promoting legal aid, the prosecution of crimes of violence against women, the effectiveness of Women's Protection Centres (shelters), and public legal awareness. IDLO is also working to increase the effectiveness of the *Elimination of Violence against Women* units in the Attorney General's Office;
- In **Honduras**, IDLO is enhancing access to justice for women and other victims of domestic and intra-familial violence. IDLO's work improves the capacity of justice providers and increases legal awareness of domestic and intra-familial violence. A comprehensive model has been created to provide direct legal and support services to victims of violence, including the development of a coordination mechanism for actors to improve victim support, investigations and prosecutions.
- In **Mongolia**, IDLO is combating domestic violence by improving the mechanisms, coordination and capacities of the justice sector and other relevant actors. The program brings together representatives from justice sector institutions and service providers in a consultative and participatory process to enhance cross-sectoral responses to domestic violence.
- In **Tunisia**, IDLO is supporting the Tunisian Ministry of Women, Family and Childhood in implementing constitutional provisions on women's rights and the eradication of all forms of violence against women. The project supports the legislative reform agenda on GBV and the adoption of guidelines for women's shelters. IDLO is promoting the participation of women justice professionals through pilot research, a regional workshop and capacity development for women legal professionals.
- In **Uganda and Tanzania**, IDLO is strengthening the capacity of adolescent girls, young women and their communities to hold service providers accountable for the delivery of quality and accessible HIV-related services. The project uses an innovative blend of legal empowerment and social accountability strategies. Project activities include establishing paralegal pools, conducting community assessments and feedback processes, capacity development, legal empowerment and social accountability strategies.

We would like to take this opportunity to ask the following questions to the panel:

- 1) Could you tell us more about the Committee and other relevant actors' plans regarding the dissemination and domestic application of GR 35?

- 2) How does the Committee envisage, in the context of SDG 17, linking its work with inter-governmental organizations like IDLO, as well as civil society, and advancing South-South, North-South and other international cooperation moving forward?

IDLO stands ready to support the CEDAW Committee in promotion of the rights of all women and girls, through the advancement of the rule of law.

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.*