

# STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

## 36TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: ANNUAL DISCUSSION ON THE INTEGRATION OF A GENDER PERSPECTIVE THROUGHOUT THE WORK OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL AND THAT OF ITS MECHANISMS

Room XX, Palais des Nations

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*Delivered by Hector Guerra, Office of the Permanent Observer to the United Nations in Geneva*

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Mr. President,

The International Development Law Organization (IDLO), the only intergovernmental organization with an exclusive mandate to further the rule of law, welcomes this annual discussion on integrating a gender perspective throughout the work of the Human Rights Council, taking into account the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment.

IDLO agrees with the concept note and the panelists that the SDG and UPR processes can and should be mutually reinforcing. While Agenda 2030 provides a clear roadmap for the achievement of important development goals and the UPR mechanism is aimed at the promotion and protection of human rights, both processes highlight the centrality of equality and the importance of **leaving no one behind**.

Unfortunately, whilst there has been some progress, the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment remains elusive. Laws continue to fail in adequately protecting the rights of women and girls. Almost 90% of all economies still have legal provisions that discriminate against women. Women continue to suffer gender biases in the implementation of laws. They have limited access to justice. Women are also largely excluded from participating in and benefitting from development processes. Alarming, gender-based violence remains one of the most pervasive forms of assault on women.

How do we address this sobering reality for women and girls? IDLO strongly believes that the rule of law is essential to the common Agenda 2030 and UPR's goal of achieving gender equality. "The rule of law requires that laws are free from bias and discrimination, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and consistent with international human rights norms and standards."

On one hand, legal and justice institutions can promote and protect gender equality and create opportunities for women. On the other hand, inaccessible institutions can impede the progress of women's rights and leave women vulnerable to appalling levels of violence and exploitation.

Our experience in many countries around the world emphasizes the fundamental role of the rule of law in achieving gender equality and vice versa.



- In Afghanistan, IDLO continues to support the specialized prosecution units within the Attorney-General's Office in managing cases of violence against women, whilst also strengthening a network of women's shelters, with the aim of ensuring better accountability for gender-based violence and providing safety and support services to survivors.
- In Liberia, IDLO works to strengthen the efficiency, transparency and accountability of the Court that deals exclusively with sexual offense cases.
- In Burundi, Uganda and Tanzania, IDLO works with women and girls - and communities more broadly - in seeking accountability for the provision of HIV and health-related services, as well as the improvement of such services.
- In a range of countries, such as Kenya, Honduras, Mongolia, Myanmar and Somalia, IDLO provides technical support regarding the management of cases of gender-based violence by legal actors, including through policy formulation, prosecution, investigation, legal education, legal training and community engagement.

Drawing lessons from our work, IDLO recommends that the Human Rights Council, through the UPR process and its other mechanisms, continues to recognize the synergies between the rule of law and gender equality, and systematically:

- 1) Ensures that legal, policy and institutional frameworks are gender-responsive, especially in countries in situations of conflict, fragility or crisis;
- 2) Supports women's access to justice, whether in formal or customary systems; and
- 3) Promotes women's empowerment and involvement in sustainable development processes.

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.*