



INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION
STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL, MS JAN BEAGLE

**UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL PANEL DISCUSSION ON 'GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE
PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DURING AND AFTER THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC'**

50th session of the Human Rights Council

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Thank you, Mr President.

I would also like to thank the Deputy High Commissioner for setting the stage for this important discussion.

Over the last two years, COVID-19 has transformed our world.

In addition to its devastating human impact, it has further deepened inequalities, exacerbated fragilities, and exposed major trust deficits in governance.

But while COVID-19 has laid bare the consequences of underinvestment in the rule of law and sustainable development, it has also challenged us to innovate and explore alternative approaches.

Governments have been forced to adapt, and increasingly shift services online.

From how we access justice, to how we receive public health updates, technology has changed our lives during the pandemic.

It is clear that we are at a moment of transition.

COVID-19 has created an opportunity to make governance more people-centred, and to put the advancement of human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, at the heart of our actions.

In order to forge this more equitable future we must harness the potential of new technologies.

This is why digital innovation is at the centre of IDLO's Strategic Plan.

We work top-down with institutions, and bottom-up with civil society, to promote new technologies to empower justice seekers, support good governance, and transform institutions to make them work for people.

Let me share with you four insights, drawing on IDLO's experience.

First, we must support targeted digital innovations that render institutions more efficient, effective, and better able to meet the needs of communities.

IDLO has worked, for example, in Afghanistan, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Yemen to support the development of electronic case management and court information systems to improve the effectiveness and accessibility of justice institutions.

Second, we need to support social platforms and digital technologies to empower citizens to access their rights.

We have seen this in Myanmar, where IDLO responded to COVID-19 by using podcasts and livestreams to raise awareness about sexual and gender-based violence.

Third, we must maximise the role that ICTs can play in preventing and countering corruption. This is essential to ensuring transparent governance that rebuilds trust in institutions.

In Ukraine, IDLO has introduced digital systems to standardize administrative processes, and increase data sharing between social service centres, reducing the risk of corruption by public officials.

In Indonesia we have strengthened procedures on the admissibility of electronic evidence and the capacity of justice sector institutions to utilize technology for corruption trials.

But the potential for new technologies is not just limited to good governance.

Rather, digital innovations can act as a cross-cutting enabler for all 17 SDGs.

Open data can drive more informed and responsive policies, helping ensure broader and more equal access in areas such as education, health and justice.

Likewise, as UN Under-Secretary General Rosemary DiCarlo recently noted in her briefing to the Security Council, digital monitoring tools can help us predict and plan for global threats and crises and design data-driven peacebuilding programmes.

Finally, technologies are essential in promoting inclusive economic development and supporting the creation of enabling environments.

In Tunisia, IDLO has supported the creation of digital marketplaces for the economic empowerment of survivors of gender-based violence.

But while new technologies provide boundless opportunities, they also come with risks. The digital world is generally not regulated.

Harnessing digital data for the global good is a key governance challenge.

If not distributed, and regulated, in a way that is equitable, new technologies can further exacerbate the digital divide.

Women are 20 per cent less likely to own a smartphone and 20 per cent less likely to access the internet, than men.

Similarly, rural and isolated communities are far less likely to have access to technologies and online platforms than those based in cities.

And as Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo noted, technology can also negatively affect conflict and development dynamics. Misuse of social media can enable the spread of disinformation, racism and misogyny.

Data governance is politically sensitive. It requires a multidisciplinary approach, including human rights.

In his report *Our Common Agenda* Secretary-General Guterres calls for a global compact to promote an “open, free and secure digital future for all”. We have a critical opportunity to forge a consensus on how technologies can be used for the good of people and planet.

The rule of law has a powerful role to play in striking this balance and ensuring that the use of technologies is fair and equitable, especially for vulnerable and marginalized populations.

And ensuring that the digital divide does not become the new face of gender inequality.

By fostering strong, effective institutions, the rule of law can encourage transparent processes for procuring new technologies.

By promoting adherence to human rights, it can help ensure that the policies regulating those technologies are non-discriminatory.

And by ensuring open, participatory governance, it can help develop pathways for the continuous review of technologies and their impact.

In other words, the rule of law creates the enabling environment to reap the rewards of technologies, while reducing the risk that they will benefit only the few.

Drawing on this, I would like to conclude with some recommendations to the Council, very similar to those of the Deputy High Commissioner.

In its work to support international cooperation and the efficient use of new technologies, the Council should:

- Place the rule of law at the heart of its discussions, and adopt a people-centred approach to digital innovation.
- Build on the recommendations of the most recent session of the Council's Forum on Democracy, Human Rights, and the Rule of Law, which I chaired in November 2021, and share best practices in the use of new technologies and capacity building to enhance access to justice.

- Ensure that the use of technology is regulated by clear legal and policy frameworks that respect human rights.
- Promote digital empowerment, alongside digital innovation, with a focus on increasing the digital access and literacy of vulnerable populations.
- Foster multidisciplinary approaches to data governance, and encourage the use of disaggregated data in policymaking.

I look forward to further discussing these ideas, and how to ensure a people-centred approach to new technologies that leaves no-one behind.

IDLO stands ready to work with partners to harness the role of technologies in promoting human rights and good governance, and building back better from COVID-19.