

STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

40TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL:
INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

WITH MS. AMINA MOHAMMED, DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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

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Thank you, Mr. President.

It is a privilege to participate in this Interactive Dialogue with Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed on behalf of the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), an intergovernmental organization devoted to advancing the contribution of the rule of law to human rights, peacebuilding and sustainable development.

We would like to express our deep appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General for her inspiring and insightful vision of the relationship between human rights and development, and for her work over the years championing the rule of law as a “self-evident” objective and as “catalytic” for all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We thank High Commissioner Bachelet for making clear on many occasions the relationship between strong institutions and rule of law, and human rights and sustainable development, including yesterday in her presentation of her Annual Report, as she said: *“Goal 16 is a clear statement that fair access to justice; effective, accountable and inclusive institutions; and sound and inclusive governance are vital, priority development issues. We need much more – and faster – work to implement that promise, by enacting laws, policies and programmes which adopt and advance the powerful synergies resulting from the interdependence of all human rights.”*

Strong institutions and legal frameworks that guarantee both political and civil rights and economic, social and cultural rights provide the foundation for concretely implementing human rights standards, promoting peace, and advancing sustainable development.

Fair laws and regulations pave the way to the inclusive societies envisaged in SDG 16 and enable progress towards each and every one of the other SDGs. As just one example at the convergence of SDGs 5, 10 and 16, IDLO is partnering with UN Women in a new initiative – *Equality in Law for Women and Girls by 2030* - to identify laws that discriminate against women and to work with governments and civil society in countries to repeal such laws and to advance equality.

While essential, laws alone are not sufficient. Strong justice sector institutions, including an independent judiciary, are needed to enforce and implement fair and equitable laws and policies, and thus to operationalize human rights and development in peoples’ lives. Ultimately, rule of law requires the legal empowerment of people at the grassroots level to access justice, to claim their rights, and to achieve fair remedies with accountability.

Justice also depends upon bridging the gap between the formal justice sector and informal and customary legal systems, where the majority of people in many countries turn to resolve their disputes. For this reason, we are launching in the coming months a dialogue open to all stakeholders 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.

As a field-based intergovernmental organization, IDLO has seen that investing in the justice sector and legal empowerment are among the best investments that can be made to promote compliance with international human rights standards, prevent conflict and build peace, and to accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

We are 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 convened in Rome in late May, which will inform the High-Level Political Forum review of SDG 16 and other Goals through the theme of *“Empowering people and ensuring equality and inclusiveness.”*

We would like to ask you, Madame Deputy Secretary-General, if you would share with us your thinking on how to increase investment in strong institutions and rule of law at national and local levels, in the service of human rights, peace and sustainable development. Can we draw lessons from other human rights and development initiatives - for example, the approach of *“shared responsibility”* that we have seen in the response to the AIDS pandemic - to help mobilize greater local, national and international resources?

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.