

## STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

### COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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#### Check against delivery

The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) greatly appreciates this opportunity to address the Commission. As the only intergovernmental organization with an exclusive mandate to strengthen the rule of law, IDLO is present in all regions of the world.

Gender equality and the rule of law must be at the heart of sustainable and inclusive patterns of development. Without justice and the rule of law, as enshrined in SDG 16, many SDGs are promises without pathways to reach them.

Good laws, strong institutions and access to justice are critical enablers of social protection, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for women.

Legal identity documents for example, not only prove who we are, but unlock access to public goods, such as social protection schemes, healthcare, education, and protection services. Unfortunately, an estimated one billion people face significant challenges in proving who they are, due to lack of identity documents. In low-income countries, over 45% of women lack an ID compared to 30% of men. In many cases, discriminatory nationality laws are the main obstacle preventing women to secure legal documents.

Good laws are also critical to ensure better social protection and access to public services for women. In many countries, women who engage in domestic labor and family farm work are often excluded from the protection of labor laws and social security. More than 60% of women in any kind of employment do not have legal guarantees of mandatory maternity cash benefits.

In the name of austerity, many legal reform proposals for the advancement of social protection and the extension of public services are under threat, and this has a dramatic effect on women, especially single women with children and women survivors of violence, pushing them further into poverty.

For women to be able to access public good and services, they must be provided safe and secure spaces to do so. Gender-based violence against women remains one of the most pervasive obstacles to women's access to services. More than a billion women do not have legal protection from domestic violence. Gender-based violence is often used to prevent women from asserting their rights to public goods and infrastructure, such as education, health care, water, food, sanitation.

Good laws, policies and institutions are not enough, however. Women need to be empowered as rights holders to be able to access to justice and claim their right to enjoy social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructures. Legal empowerment strategies – including legal awareness, legal education, paralegal support and legal aid – play a critical role in this process, together with women’s collective action as a catalyst for change.

SDGs 5 and 16 are mutually reinforcing goals. At their intersection, justice for women is essential for the practical realization of all SDGs and to ensure that all women enjoy equal rights in social protection, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure.

Thank you.

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*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.*