

STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

**DONOR ROUNDTABLE MEETING ON THE WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE FLAGSHIP
INITIATIVE: "ADDRESSING IMPUNITY AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH EFFECTIVE
WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN DIVERSE COUNTRY CONTEXTS"**

Conference Room 12, UN Secretariat, New York

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New York

Delivered by Mr. Patrizio Civili, Permanent Observer to the UN, IDLO

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Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates, colleagues, Ladies and gentlemen,

Thanks to the Norwegian Ambassador, UN Women and panellists.

Let me say at the outset that IDLO, the only inter-governmental organization exclusively devoted to advancing the rule of law, is proud to be part of this initiative, which addresses a cause that is both central to IDLO's priorities and crucial to enabling progress to achieve Agenda 2030.

Throughout the world, millions of women continue to be denied justice. Women and girls suffer appalling levels of discrimination, violence and neglect, with very limited means to access effective remedies. This is so because their road to justice is often impeded by discriminatory legal frameworks, unequal social norms, and inaccessible or gender-biased justice institutions.

Women's access to justice is especially challenging in crisis-affected States. The breakdown of law and order, weakened justice institutions, opportunistic violence and other forms of extremism, create an environment that breeds impunity. In many situations, sexual and gender-based violence is used as a weapon of war; in other cases, women and girls themselves are used as human shields with great risks to their lives and the safety of their families.

Also, despite the primacy that the international community has been giving to gender concerns in conflict resolution and peace building, women's participation and representation in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements remain negligible.¹

Overall, although some significant gains have been made in improving women's access to justice in conflict and fragile situations, the challenge remains immense.

¹ Between 1992 and 2011, only four per cent of signatories to peace agreements and less than 10 per cent of negotiators at peace tables were women. (UN Women Facts and figures: Peace and security. See at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>).

We know from our work around the world that good laws, fair justice institutions and an empowered constituency of women are vital in dismantling discriminatory structures, enhancing accountability for violations of women's rights, and advancing gender equality. This is why SDG 16 is not only important as a goal in its own right. It is also critically relevant to SDG 5: a robust legal and justice environment is imperative to gender equality and women's empowerment.

In turn, SDG 5, points to the crucial importance of gender equality in strengthening the rule of law, which is addressed in SDG 16; in combatting inequalities addressed in SDG 10; and, more generally, in achieving, across goals, the overall objective of human progress that underlie Agenda 2030. Integrating gender in laws and policies is instrumental in bringing about equitable, accountable and fair justice institutions that cater to the needs of the entire population.

Advancing synergies between law and gender is a guiding principle of much of IDLO's work.

In **Afghanistan**, IDLO continues to strengthen specialized prosecution units in the Attorney-General's Office to handle cases of violence against women; and we work with a network of women's shelters in the country so they can offer better safety and support services, to survivors of violence.

In **Liberia**, IDLO works to strengthen the efficiency, transparency and accountability of a specialized Criminal Court designed to deal exclusively with sexual offenses.

In a range of countries across regions - **Kenya, Myanmar, Somalia, and South Sudan** - IDLO is providing technical support in handling sexual and gender violence, including through policy formulation, prosecution and investigation, as well as legal education and training, and community engagement.

In **Tanzania and Uganda**, IDLO through legal empowerment and social accountability is strengthening the capacities of women and girls and their communities to hold service providers accountable and seek justice through many pathways.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, IDLO is focusing on community justice mechanisms and their capacity to deliver fair outcomes to women and girls.

A key lesson that we - and, I trust, all international actors engaged in advancing justice for women as an integral part of achieving Agenda 2030 - are learning from experience on the ground is that building and strengthening partnerships is critical to accelerating and sustaining change

This is for different reasons. But a key one is simply that women's access to justice is a complex, multi-dimensional challenge that requires multi-dimensional solutions that only partnerships can bring.

It is this vision that has guided UN Women, UNODC and IDLO to jointly commit, together with UNDP, to this initiative and to seek your crucial support. The Global Programme being

launched today is a partnership of experiences, expertise, and resources. It is founded on a common intolerance for injustice and impunity; a common commitment to advancing the goals of Agenda 2030 in an integrated, mutually reinforcing way; and mutual respect for the unique set of skills that each of us can bring to the table.

Together, we trust that you will join us in ensuring that injustice for women and girls no longer goes unaddressed. And, together, we hope that this global program will serve to bring about real progress in delivering justice to women, particularly those in fragile and conflict countries, and indeed to all women across the world.

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.