

STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

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*Madam President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Colleagues and Friends,*

Nelson Mandela was born at a time when inequality between races and genders was accepted in both policy and fact; when nations used force to pursue their agendas; and the gap between the rich and the poor seemed too big to overcome.

Unfortunately, our world today is not that different.

Yes, apartheid is dead.

But many of the other things against which Mandela fought are still alive today and, in some cases, thriving: entrenched poverty, growing inequalities, violent conflicts, widespread violence against women and girls, rising authoritarianism, intolerance and erosion of human rights.

There can be no peace without justice.

I was one of many among the crowds in London in 2005, when Nelson Mandela said:

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.”

We know it only too well at the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), the world’s only intergovernmental organization exclusively devoted to the rule of law and development. For 30 years we have been in some of the poorest and most fragile parts of the world, working to reform laws, strengthen institutions and empower people to access justice and claim their rights.

The rule of law is not an abstract concept but the means through which peaceful, inclusive societies can be built. It gives a widow rights to the land she has farmed for decades. It allows a community to resolve its disputes in a courtroom, rather than on the battlefield. It empowers the poor to hold the powerful to account.

Access to justice and the rule of law are integral elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They are also fundamental to preventing conflicts and

sustaining peace.

IDLO welcomes the Summit Declaration. We note in particular the call to “move beyond words”.

The biggest threat to peace is not war but the failure of leadership - the failure to stand up against intolerance, the erosion of human rights, and attacks on the rule of law at national and international levels.

Mandela’s legacy is one of courageous leadership. Allow me to recall his words,” ...the world is hungry for action, not words. Act with courage and vision”.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, let us all act with courage and vision.

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.