

**STATEMENT OF THE
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION
(IDLO)**

WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

Plenary

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Istanbul, Turkey

Delivered by Irene Khan, Director General, IDLO

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As the head of the world's only intergovernmental organization exclusively devoted to advancing the rule of law and development, I am honored to address the World Humanitarian Summit.

IDLO believes that the rule of law, properly understood and applied, is essential for ensuring the rights of all those in need of humanitarian protection – civilians, refugees, migrants and the displaced – as well as enabling humanitarian workers to carry out their work in safety and in conformity with humanitarian principles.

The international legal framework, constructed with great care over the past century, provides a solid basis for humanitarian action. Unfortunately, that legal architecture is today often disregarded, and showing some signs of distress.

We see gaps in commitment, compliance and capacity, and flagrant violations of international law and humanitarian norms. They are blatant in battlefields and communities in war-torn countries, and also increasingly apparent on the borders of wealthy countries that are turning their backs on refugees and asylum seekers in need.

The World Humanitarian Summit provides an important opportunity to recognize that investing in the rule of law is as much a part of the humanitarian agenda as providing food, water, shelter, and health services.

We know – and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal 16 strongly reinforce it – that investing in the justice sector is one of the best decisions States can make to protect and empower people, especially those who are the most vulnerable and marginalized.

A strong, independent judiciary and properly trained police, prosecutors and border officials, backed by laws and regulations in line with international obligations, mean that in times of crises there are well-established institutions to uphold international law and humanitarian norms and address impunity. Developing the capacity of legal and justice systems is critical for effective humanitarian response.

However, institutions alone are not enough. People must be made aware of their rights so that they are able to claim them. That is why, alongside its capacity development programs, IDLO also promotes legal empowerment strategies and legal services for women, poor people, migrants and other marginalized groups.

The rule of law is about equal protection of rights, about leaving no one behind. By empowering people it helps to build resilient societies. By strengthening the integrity and capacity of institutions, it ensures justice and accountability.

Building the rule of law takes time, vision and money – and is often not a priority among other pressing needs. But the more governments and the international community invest in the rule of law, the better equipped they will be to protect and assist people during humanitarian crises.

As an organization that works in some of the most insecure parts of the world, the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) commits to assist governments to integrate international humanitarian norms and standards in their domestic laws and institutions.

We commit to empower refugees, displaced persons and other vulnerable populations to claim their rights.

We commit to building gender sensitive laws and institutions to eradicate sexual and gender based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, to strengthen women's economic empowerment and to increase their participation in the justice sector.

For too long, the humanitarian and development communities have worked in isolation from each other. It is time to bridge that gap.

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.