



STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MULTILATERALISM AND DIPLOMACY FOR PEACE

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Multilateralism and the rule of law, so critical to advancing peace and security, human dignity and individual well-being, may sometimes appear to be abstract concepts, distant from the day to day lives of people. This may be particularly true in the current coronavirus crisis, with so many people grieving their losses of loved ones and livelihoods, and with the threats of economic collapse and famine that people in many parts of the world are facing.

Far from abstract, however, multilateralism and the rule of law are both real and concrete, rooted in peoples' innate sense of solidarity, equity and equality. They provide the essential elements for strong and good governance and, in the current context, for managing the pandemic, for mitigating its consequences and for guiding policymaking to build resilience against future shocks. Multilateralism and rule of law are also intimately related and reinforce each other.

In the past several weeks, how many times have we seen in cities most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic banners displayed in neighborhoods, both rich and poor, with messages to the effect that "we are all in this together"? And how many manifestations have we seen all over the world - in the face of border closures and measures separating countries, communities, families and the old from the young - of peoples' readiness to sacrifice for the greater common good and a better and more just world to follow? We have also witnessed grave episodes of intolerance, discrimination, and domestic violence. And there are instances of profiting from the crisis for greed or power. But peoples' calls for action, policies and leadership that recognize that this crisis can only be addressed together through cooperation and solidarity at all levels—communities, countries, regions and globally—is pervasive.

Multilateralism is built on these roots. At its core it means uniting for common purposes. There is no playbook for policy makers to deal with the unprecedented spread of COVID-19 and its consequences. What is clear is that the challenges it poses are universal and that there can be no health or safety within national borders alone. Multilateralism provides the framework for governments to learn from each other about the effectiveness of actions, to share data and analyses of impact for the short as well as the longer term, and to support each other along the way.

Agenda 2030 provides a roadmap of common, universal objectives towards building more resilient societies. By advancing justice, equity and inclusiveness, **adherence to the rule of law** ensures the conditions for sustaining immediate responses to crises and for building resilience for the long haul. It is key to the legitimacy of institutions and ensuring citizens' trust in government. It paves the way for redressing inequalities that magnify societies' vulnerabilities. Globally, it leads to a more level playing field and the construction of a rule-based international system of which multilateralism is the custodian.

In my previous policy statement on a rule of law based response to the COVID-19 pandemic, I stressed that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — particularly SDG 16 as an enabler of peace, justice and inclusion — should remain at the center of our efforts in response to the pandemic. Progress towards the Agenda is also the path to strengthen multilateralism and its capacity to lead to stronger, more resilient, and more cohesive societies.

IDLO's contribution to the global response to the pandemic focuses on three main areas:

- strengthening the legal and policy framework for managing COVID-19 and its aftermath,
- mitigating the impact of the crisis on justice systems and justice seekers with a specific focus on those most vulnerable particularly women and marginalized groups,
- advocating for the critical need to maintain the rule of law, to help countries to strengthen their governance and institutions, and to support and invest in a culture of justice to protect the rights and dignity of people everywhere.

We are pursuing these objectives by working with governments and judiciaries, as well as with communities and civil society, to help strengthen institutions, their accountability and their capacity to deliver just outcome. We are supporting communities and leaders to combat the drivers of conflict and to embed international laws that work to disincentivize violence—from strengthening criminal justice to fighting corruption. And we are contributing to an inclusive, on-going dialogue among governance actors on policy making for the COVID-19 response and recovery that is built on and serves to further advance the rule of law.

At a time when we have such a stark reminder of international interdependence, advances towards multilateralism, global solidarity and respect for the rule of law are more critical than ever.

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.