

STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
LAW ORGANIZATION

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

September 23, 2019

New York

Statement by Irene Khan, Director-General, IDLO

Mr. President,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

To achieve Universal Health Coverage, it is imperative that we strengthen the institutions of justice and the rule of law. You may ask what is the connection between health and the rule of law?

Allow me to give a few examples:

- Many women, girls and marginalized and vulnerable communities such as people living with HIV, are unable to access the health services they need because of discrimination, including within the health sector itself. Laws and access to justice are valuable tools for fighting discrimination.
- Consider the role that regulatory and fiscal measures (including taxes on unhealthy products such as tobacco) play in reducing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and increasing state funds to fight poverty and disease.
- Legal frameworks can incentivize research and encourage technology transfer to ensure access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

I could add that strong legal institutions are also a bulwark against corruption in the health sector and threats to global health as a result of falsified and substandard medicines.

Mr. President,

As the world's only inter-governmental organization exclusively devoted to advancing the rule of law and sustainable development, IDLO has put into practice the relationship between health and the law to achieve concrete outcomes.

Through our work in partnership with UNAIDS, we have helped to fight discrimination against people living with HIV and key populations in Central America and the Middle East & North Africa. We have piloted legal empowerment and social accountability approaches to increase access to HIV prevention services for adolescent girls and young women in East Africa.

With the World Bank, we have explored how strengthened legal institutions are needed to stop the spread of falsified and substandard medicines in Uganda. With WHO, we are working in five countries in East Africa and South Asia to build legal capacity to address NCDs and promote health diets and physical activity.

Universal Health Coverage is a catalyst for socio-economic development and a key contributor to equity, social justice and inclusive economic growth. In the same way, the rule of law and strong justice institutions are a catalyst for Universal Health Coverage.

We are encouraged and inspired by the strong declaration on the Universal Health Coverage adopted by this High-level meeting. We call on governments to strengthen their commitments to SDG 16 as a means of advancing SDG 3. Peace, progress and sustainability – and indeed human health and well-being – are built on the foundations of justice. Access to justice and the rule of law are essential to achieving Universal Health Coverage, and we are committed to working with governments and other stakeholders towards that end.

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.