

## STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

HIGH-LEVEL FORUM EVENT ON ADVANCING WOMEN'S ROLES AND RIGHTS  
AMID GLOBAL CHALLENGES

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New York

*Delivered by Irene Khan, Director-General, IDLO*

Allow me first of all to thank the panelists for the candor of their presentations and for the courage with which they are fighting to enhance women's voices, roles and rights in the context of peace and security.

I head the International Development Law Organization, the world's only inter-governmental organization exclusively devoted to the rule of law and sustainable development. We work in many post-conflict and conflict-affected countries and fragile environments. One of our major goals is closing the justice gap that women and girls face. The question I have for the panelists is: how do you see the relationship between justice and peace when it comes to women?

Our experience on the ground shows that it is not possible to move the women, peace and security agenda without more attention to the issues of access to justice for women and women's leadership in the justice sector.

In Afghanistan, IDLO has been working for almost a decade to combat sexual and gender-based violence, supporting the establishment of specialized prosecution units, training women prosecutors, judges and defense lawyers, and strengthening the capacity of women's shelter networks.

In Liberia, we are supporting women police officers as an integral part of the strategy to address trafficking of women and girls.

Progress is slow and painful, but there is no doubt about the beneficial effects of women's enhanced role in the justice sector on women's access to justice.

Women's role in the justice sector – as justice providers as well as justice seekers – is extremely important in the context of peace-making and peace-building. Justice institutions are critical in building confidence in the peace process and it is only when institutions are representative of and responsive to the needs of all parts of society that they engender trust. That is why women's role in the justice sector is critical.

The legal empowerment of women has helped to put gender equality on the peace-making agenda. Kenya is a great example where, following the outbreak of political violence, women's groups contributed heavily to the drafting of the 2010 Constitution, influencing critical provisions on gender equality and women's human rights, that in turn led to significant legal reforms. I am proud to say that IDLO has played a major role in the drafting and subsequent implementation of the Constitution, including the revision of

Matrimonial Property Act, making the judiciary more sensitive to the needs of women and girls, and implementing constitutional provisions to enhance the participation of women in the public sector.

Allow me also to stress the role of customary and informal systems in many conflict-affected and post-conflict states and their impact on women and girls, both positive and negative. Engagement with such systems is essential to ensure that women's voices are heard and that they are empowered to claim their rights.

I hope that the women, peace and security community will give more attention to increasing investment in gendered justice. Gender responsive institutions, gender sensitive laws are essential for sustaining peace and they cannot be created without women's full participation in the justice sector.

I would like to encourage Sweden to promote the feminization of the rule of law alongside its feminist foreign policy. Gendered peace and gendered justice go hand in hand.

*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.*