



**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION**  
**STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL, MS JAN BEAGLE**  
**THE JOINT CONFERENCE OF THE EAST AFRICAN CHIEF JUSTICES' FORUM AND**  
**THE EAST AFRICAN JUDICIAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

12 May 2021

Honourable Chief Justices,  
Members of the East African Judiciaries,  
Distinguished Guests,

As Director-General of the International Development Law Organization, it is a pleasure to participate in this special joint conference of the East African Chief Justices' Forum and the East African Judicial Education Committee.

IDLO has been active in East Africa since 2009, with programmes in Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Burundi and Uganda.

As a proud partner and supporter of the rule of law and the judiciaries across the region, it is a great pleasure to see these annual meetings grow into a vibrant forum for knowledge sharing and dialogue on emerging legal, jurisprudential and development issues.

As the only global intergovernmental organisation exclusively devoted to promoting peace and sustainable development through the rule of law, IDLO believes that this year's theme on "the role of the judiciary in promoting the rule of law and environmental justice for sustainable development" is both timely and important.

COVID-19 has shown us that effective laws, adjudicated by independent and effective judiciaries, are more important than ever in times of crisis.

We have all seen a dramatic increase in the need for judicial services during the pandemic.

Judiciaries around the world, including in the East Africa region, are playing a pivotal role in promoting a rule of law-based response to the crisis.

Courts are adopting innovative measures to ensure victims of gender-based violence have access to legal protection and redress.

Judges are working to ensure human rights are upheld amid lockdowns and restrictions on movement, and that democratic norms are respected.

Judiciaries are reviewing and adjudicating offenses related to corruption, so that aid goes to the right recipients.

IDLO is pleased to support you in these efforts.

For instance, in Kenya we have assisted with the development and delivery of e-justice tools for filing, case management and issuing judgements.

This has been critical in enabling courts to continue functioning during lockdown, ensuring the rule of law is maintained and that access to justice is not denied.

In Uganda we have supported legal aid services, including mediation, legal representation, advice and referral services, to more than 600 people in Kampala, Wakiso, Lamwo and Iganga.

We need to further strengthen this partnership, because putting justice at the centre of our efforts, is essential, not just to manage this crisis, but to build a more peaceful, just and sustainable future.

Today, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents both humanity's highest aspirations and an effective roadmap for recovery.

The law is critical to accelerating progress on peace and development.

Many SDGs implicitly draw on the principles of inclusivity, equity and nondiscrimination and require the creation of new legal frameworks and institutional capacity for their implementation.

This is particularly clear in the case of climate change, which impacts everything from access to food and water, biodiversity, public health, land use, city planning, and mobility, to basic human security and human rights.

It exacerbates inequalities both between and within countries.

The poorest and most vulnerable in society are hardest hit, while developing countries, who have contributed least to the problem, are more severely affected by increasing climate-induced threats.

Biodiversity loss, associated with climate change, adversely affects food systems and the health of populations.

Competition over increasingly scarce land and resources undermines peace and security, driving conflict and migration.

Gender inequalities are worsened, and indigenous livelihoods are threatened.

The Rule of law is key to building the type of institutional mechanisms and fair, rule-based processes needed to address such complex challenges.

Environmental justice was a central issue during the SDG 16 Conference, which was co-organised by IDLO, UN DESA and Italy last month.

Mary Robinson, Chair of the Elders, highlighted the global responsibility to provide low- and middle-income countries, with the tools and resources they need to develop, while protecting the environment.

As new legal and regulatory frameworks on climate change and environmental protection emerge, judiciaries have a central role to play in ensuring that they are effective and fairly balance the urgent needs of the present, with our responsibility to our children and grandchildren.

Just two weeks ago, for example, Germany's constitutional court ruled that national laws to tackle climate change are "unconstitutional" because the targets were set too low and placed an unfair burden on future generations.

The German government has now committed to more ambitious cuts by the end of the year.

As part of IDLO's recently adopted Strategic Plan, to which many of you contributed last year, we are committed to addressing the impact of climate change through a rights-based, rule of law approach.

We look forward to cooperating with you to promote such an approach in the East Africa region through measures including:

Building national capacities in the justice sector to undertake legal assessments and develop action plans.

Enhancing the capacity of judicial officers to adjudicate matters related to the environment, land rights, biodiversity and climate resilient development; and

Supporting policy dialogues to exchange lessons learned and best practices on environmental justice in the region.

There is tremendous scope for us to learn by sharing experiences and expertise, and to use this knowledge as a catalyst to promote the vision of a greener and more just world where everyone lives with dignity and equality under the rule of law.

I wish you successful deliberations on these vital issues.