



STATEMENT ON DEMOCRACY DAY

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COVID-19 is exposing existing fragilities to democracy, good governance and the rule of law. Citizens' growing distrust of government has been exacerbated by the pandemic and has also limited swift and effective governance responses.

Democracy, much like the rule of law, is not static but rather a goal which must be constantly pursued and upheld. Democracy is a set of universal values rooted in human rights and the rule of law –an enabler of people's right to participate in public affairs and to seek an equal and equitable share in the common proceeds.

The United Nations has placed “building back better” as an imperative to guide the recovery from the global pandemic. The inequalities and injustices that governance – local, national and global – continue to neglect sow the seeds for division, discrimination and distrust, and threaten democratic institutions. With crises come opportunities and the world's response must ensure that those left furthest behind are protected in the response to the crisis and contribute to the recovery efforts toward a more sustainable future.

IDLO's recent policy brief on *The Rule of Law and COVID-19* sets out the framework for a rule of law-based response to the pandemic encompassing enabling legal frameworks; mitigating the impact on justice systems; and continued investment in a culture of justice.

The rule of law, defended by an independent judiciary, ensures that civil and political rights are upheld and protects civil liberties to ensure that civil society can mobilize and ensure governance remains transparent and accountable. The rule of law ensures the dignity of all citizens and recognizes the capabilities which citizens require to actively participate in democratic life.

From Kenya to Kyrgyzstan, and from Somalia to Indonesia, IDLO is deepening engagement to bolster democratic institutions. IDLO is tackling corruption which erodes public trust and confidence in institutions, affects investment and deprives the poor of much-needed resources. Applying knowledge to the establishment and operationalization of specialized anti-corruption institutions, IDLO is ensuring public processes and decision-making are more transparent and services are delivered effectively.

Globally, IDLO is seeking to promote cohesiveness in society – a cohesion that builds on and is enriched by diversity of opinions and beliefs. IDLO is empowering the marginalized and excluded to claim their rights and ensure their voices are heard. For example, in Myanmar and Tunisia, IDLO is facilitating access to information for women affected by gender-based violence, and empowering women's voices to set national priorities for the pandemic response. Supporting children and youth, IDLO is building restorative justice policies in Honduras that favor dialogue and understanding over division and distrust.

The 2030 Agenda gives us the blueprint to ensure democracy is protected during times of COVID-19 and promoted as the world recovers and builds for the future. A sustainable, equitable and inclusive recovery and a continued investment to pursue a culture of justice will develop resilient societies fit for the future. Whole-of-society approaches to better frame the response and the inclusion of youth's voices to ensure future-proofed policies are needed.

IDLO is continuing to contribute to the global efforts to advance democracy by promoting the rule of law as both an enabler of democratic and participatory processes but also as an outcome of more fair and equal societies. We will continue to support national efforts to combat poverty and exclusion and build stronger and more inclusive institutions to sustain peace and development.

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.