

**THE RULE OF LAW AND THE 2030 AGENDA:  
THE ROAD AHEAD  
BACKGROUND NOTE FOR INTERACTIVE DEBATE  
MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY OF PARTIES  
November 23-24, 2015**

“We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind.”

*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

IDLO played an active role in ensuring that the rule of law and access to justice would have a prominent place and feature as a global objective in the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) that Heads of State and Governments adopted last September at the United Nations. This is now firmly established under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 that reads: *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.* Target 16.3 under SDG 16 calls to: *Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.*

The relationship between the rule of law and the 2030 Agenda does, however, go deeper than SDG 16. The Political Declaration that introduces the SDGs states:

*Sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security; and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. The new Agenda recognizes the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions.*

Beyond this statement of principle, both the political declaration and the SDGs being launched through the 2030 Agenda place special emphasis on promoting equity and social justice through transformative investments in, among other areas, education, food security, health, water, gender equality – equity and justice being the very “outcomes” of the rule of law on which IDLO focused its advocacy efforts during the UN processes leading to the formulation of the SDGs. In this sense, the rule of law emerges as a key enabler across all the SDGs.

The IDLO statement at the Summit elaborated on these points:

“In a ground-breaking move, the 2030 Agenda has put justice and the rule of law firmly at the heart of development. It is no longer an optional extra, but a premise without which development cannot be sustained.

Goal 16 acknowledges that access to justice, the rule of law and effective, inclusive institutions are essential ingredients of sustainable development. Clean government is as important as clean water.

But the relationship between the rule of law and the 2030 Agenda goes deeper than Goal 16.

The rule of law is about equal protection, accountability and transparency. In that sense, it cuts across all the Sustainable Development Goals. Without access to justice and the rule of law, development cannot flourish, investment will not take root, the planet cannot survive, the poor cannot overcome poverty, women cannot fight discrimination and become agents of their own destiny.

No matter where in the development spectrum a particular country stands, establishing peace or protecting the planet, eradicating poverty or encouraging economic opportunity, require good laws and regulations that are fairly administered by transparent and accountable institutions and that, most importantly, produce fair outcomes for all.

Agenda 2030 is an inspiring document - but it will become a truly transformative agenda only when the words are converted into action.”

The 2030 Agenda is considered by many to be the most ambitious development initiative of our time. It embodies a stronger commitment to an integrated and rights-based approach towards development than the international community has been able to embrace in recent times. Stronger recognition of the need for mutually reinforcing interventions across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development is among the most powerful strands of an integrated agenda. Equally striking are commitments to address inequality, migration, disabilities, social justice and social inclusion.

Yet, the Agenda is being rolled out during a period of tremendous economic volatility, sharp increases in urban and sectarian violence, massive migration and refugee flows, and heightened geopolitical uncertainty. The Declaration itself recognizes that the lofty ambitions of the 2030 Agenda stand in sharp contrast to the volatility and uncertainty that defines our time. Still, the Declaration also notes, this is a period of “immense opportunity”.

As IDLO said in its statement to the Summit:

“Building the rule of law takes vision, time and money. But it is the soundest investment there is. The more governments and the international community are willing to invest in it, the less they will have to scramble to address catastrophic development failures, from famines to refugee crises.

**Building the rule of law and ensuring access to justice is more efficient than mending the broken pieces when states fail.”**

In the coming months, governments, donors and other actors in the international community will be considering how best to reflect the SDGs in their development policies, programs and budgets. In these processes, the place of capacity building for the rule of law among the “means of implementation” of the 2030 Agenda will need to be reassessed not only in relation to SDG 16 but also across the whole agenda. IDLO’s positioning amidst these processes will determine how and where we can engage with our partners to project these implications across the SDGs, suggest approaches, and provide solutions.

In 2016, IDLO will undertake consultations as a prelude to formulating the proposed Strategic Plan 2017 - 2020, to be submitted by the Director-General to the Assembly of Member Parties in November 2016. These consultations will provide an important opportunity to engage on how IDLO might best contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and into a wider international discussion on the means and processes of SDG implementation.

The consultative process for the elaboration of the IDLO Strategic Plan will be geared to facilitate a deep and wide ranging discussion with our stakeholders on the role of the rule of law in realizing the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. This discussion will also provide direction on how best to integrate the SDGs into IDLO’s Strategic Plan. It should at the same time, serve to generate a contribution to the wider debate expected to take place within the international community on the contribution of the rule of law to the implementation of the SDGs.

## **Objective**

The interactive debate that will take place on the morning of November 24,2015 during the meeting of the Assembly of Parties will examine the role for the rule of law in supporting an inclusive, people centered 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, based on insights shared from senior officials and practitioners sharing their experiences of implementing rule of law, access to justice and development programs in their national context.

The debate should provide an opportunity for participants to:

- Highlight how experiences and lessons on implementing rule of law and access to justice programs on the ground can translate into successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda SDGs;
- Identify the resources and capacities necessary for international contributions to support national strategies;
- Discuss the role and contribution IDLO can make to the implementation of the SDGs and the interlinkages with it.

/ ENDS