

Meeting of the IDLO Assembly of Parties
23-24 November 2015

Secretary General Valensise - Opening Remarks

President Al-Mahamel,
Director General Khan, Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen, dear guests,

I am pleased to welcome you to the IDLO Assembly of Parties also on behalf of Minister Gentiloni. He would have wished to be with us this morning, but has not been able to do so due to a meeting of Italy’ s Council of Ministers that was unexpectedly called and is currently taking place.

We are particularly glad to host this Assembly meeting at the Farnesina. Our first thought today must go, with emotion, to the victims of the terrorist attacks of 13 November in Paris. We express our closeness and renewed solidarity to France. It is in the face of such tragic events that IDLO’ s work becomes all the more relevant. We are pleased to note that the rule of law and good governance are themes that are becoming increasingly crucial. We are faced with large-scale, crosscutting, terrorist phenomena and we are aware that we can respond adequately to those only through well-articulated, multidimensional approaches. We believe that Daesh must certainly be countered on a military level, but also deem essential that we all should be able to intervene to tackle the deeper causes of these phenomena.

The world is undergoing a deep transformation. We are in the midst of crises and explosions of violence. In this context, organizations like IDLO can prove to be an effective, very valid instrument to advance peace, justice and development. This is so because legal certainty is the primary antidote to conflict, just as arbitrary acts are its main cause.

Mr. President,
Madam Director General,
Dear Delegates,

The IDLO Assembly of Parties we are opening today takes place just a few months after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. This Agenda sets the path toward sustainable development for the years ahead.

In this perspective, we believe that this Assembly has the potential of providing elements of interest in addressing in 2016 the commitment we have entered into under the new Agenda. We have great confidence in the role that the Director General will play to stimulate this debate. As you know, the Agenda is aimed at addressing all the symptoms of poverty. But it also goes beyond that: it speaks to us about peace, stability, human rights, and good governance. Here we see recognition of the key role of the rule of law. These elements all come together and are highlighted under one specific goal of the agenda, SDG 16, which establishes the principle of “promoting the rule of law both domestically and internationally, guaranteeing equal access to justice for all.”

Italy has been actively engaged in the processes leading to the approval of the 2030 Agenda and - prior to its approval - in the conception of the new Agenda. The Rome Conference on the contribution of the rule of law to sustainable development, organized jointly by Italy and IDLO in July 2014, was an important milestone in this effort.

It is clear to us that sustainable development cannot exist without democracy, the rule of law and transparent institutions - institutions that are truly open to people’ s needs and allow for the largest possible number of citizens to share in the benefits of growth. There is, thus, a direct relationship between development and justice and, once again, this is why IDLO’ s mandate - a mandate that goes far beyond the mere provision of legal assistance to justice institutions - is so relevant in an ever more complex world.

In the last four years, under Director General Khan’ s leadership, the scope of the Organization has expanded significantly, both geographically and thematically - in terms of countries’ participation in the Organization, and in relation to the issues addressed by

IDLO. Today, we will have tangible evidence of this trend with the signature by the representatives of Honduras, Mongolia and Pakistan of IDLO's Establishment Agreement. We thus have three new members and, in the coming weeks, we hope to welcome yet another new member, Kyrgyzstan, which is in the last phases of the procedure for joining the Organization. These are all very positive signs upon which we should consolidate the range of activities and structures of IDLO. So, first of all, a warm welcome to the new members to the Organization.

IDLO has consolidated itself and is growing stronger. Rome being the home to the UN food Agencies, we naturally hope that the relationship between IDLO and the UN Rome-based agencies will also continue to grow and strengthen, with a particular focus on food security - a topic that does indeed go hand-in-hand with the rule of law. A world free from hunger is a goal that should continue to inspire our actions. It is also an objective that is linked in a significant way with the role of women, given their contribution to ensuring greater food security and improved nutrition for families. Also worth mentioning are the synergies of the past few months between IDLO and EXPO. In October, IDLO organized, in collaboration with the Milan Centre for Food Law and Policy, an event to showcase the experiences of countries, especially in Latin America and Africa, which have embodied the right to food in their constitutions.

This event in Milan was just one the many events organized by IDLO to promote awareness of the importance of the rule of law. For instance, IDLO will organize in Tanzania a Pan-African Conference on the Rule of Law. The conference is intended as a useful platform for the exchange of information and ideas, and the promotion of partnerships between African experts and policy makers on the one hand, and between them and the international community on the other. We believe that the recommendations emerging from this Conference will provide very positive orientations for the future work of IDLO. For our part, just a few days ago, we hosted here at the Farnesina a meeting with the African Ambassadors accredited to Rome to present the Organization's activities in Africa and the objectives of the Africa Conference, which is being organized also thanks to Italy's support.

Let me also recall that IDLO makes a rich contribution in a variety of sectors. These are all sectors to which Italy attaches growing importance. They range from the promotion of the rights of women and children to the strengthening of our capacity to host refugees and the protection of freedom of religion and belief. In relation to the latter, we have financed and jointly produced with IDLO a research study entitled "Promoting and Protecting the Universal Right to Freedom of Religion and Belief through Law", the conclusions of which will be presented next year.

Finally, allow me to say - with a hint of satisfaction - that IDLO's activities are gaining growing appreciation and a more central place in our development cooperation policies. In 2015, Italian Development Cooperation, represented here by Director-General Cantini, contributed over two and a half million euros to the Organization. Furthermore, in the last few days, our executive board allocated an additional contribution of 250,000 Euros to finance an IDLO project in Tunisia - a country very close to us in many ways. The project is specifically focused on the role of women and has as its main objective the protection against gender-based violence.

Our hope at this stage is that all Member Parties, all delegates attending the Assembly today, will - like Italy - show willingness to contribute decisively to the work, programs, initiatives and also the prospect of further growth of IDLO. It is in a sense symbolic that today you will have the opportunity to visit - in the Sala Mappamondi, next to this conference hall - the photo exhibition titled "In Focus: Justice and the Post-2015 Agenda". We believe this is a good representation of the challenges we are facing and of our commitment to respond to them. With this in mind, I wish once again to thank all my colleagues at the Presidency table and all the delegates for their attention and the contribution they will make to this meeting.

Thank you and I wish you fruitful discussions.