

Remarks for IDLO Assembly
November 23, 2015

Thank you, Mr. President.

While it has been just a year since we last gathered as the Assembly of Parties to the International Development Law Organization, we find ourselves in a new era of global development, with the pressure of new, heightened expectations for global action to create just, inclusive societies, and new challenges to transparency and the rule of law worldwide. Never has there been a greater need for the work that IDLO delivers. As the only international organization dedicated to promoting the rule of law, access to justice and the building of transparent institutions, IDLO's work has never been more critical.

The importance of IDLO's work was reinforced in September of this year, when the international development community agreed to a follow-up framework to the Millennium Development Goals to focus our efforts beyond 2015. Global consensus on Agenda 2030 shows that there is worldwide consensus and political will to eliminate poverty and hunger; bridge lingering and concerning gaps in education, health care and gender equality; and take action to conserve the planet's natural resources. It has been an enormous step forward to see global recognition that good governance and the rule of law are critical to each of these areas of sustainable development. That acknowledgement has come not only in the form of a stand-alone goal on justice and the rule of law, but also through the incorporation of elements of good governance throughout Agenda 2030.

There is no denying that we owe this important milestone to all IDLO staff from Director General Khan who was closely engaged in the Post-2015 discussions to employees working in the field working to institute rule of law and transparency. Their combined work and advocacy help us remember that peace, justice, and good governance are intrinsically linked to sustainable development. Nations that are governed transparently and democratically are less likely to go to war, are less corrupt, and, on average, are more prosperous than non-democracies. Conversely, conflict, violence, and a culture of impunity exacerbate poverty. Half of those living in extreme poverty live in places afflicted by conflict or chronic violence – and that proportion is rising. Civil wars have a devastating impact on development. And we have seen this vicious cycle play out in the first fifteen years of this new millennium. The countries where the least amount of progress has been made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals have been those affected by war and bloodshed.

At the same time, we recognize that our work to make our governments more accountable to the citizens that we serve is never ending. All governments, including developed democracies like mine, must work at building more just, inclusive, and transparent societies. President Obama reaffirmed this when addressing the UN General Assembly on the SDGs saying, “Here in this country, the wealthiest nation on Earth, we’re still working every day to perfect our union, and to be more equal and more just, and to treat the most vulnerable members of our society with value and concern.”

Also addressing the General Assembly, Director General Khan said, “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.”

It is for these reasons that the United States increased its investment in IDLO and its tailored projects in the field. We are currently the largest programmatic funder of IDLO's work, and we have been proud to fund IDLO's largest program to date, the Justice Training Transition Program in Afghanistan, which will be completed in March of next year, and we continue to support IDLO in Afghanistan through the ongoing Supporting Access to Justice in Afghanistan project.

Beyond Afghanistan, the United States is supporting ongoing IDLO projects in Somalia, South Sudan, Kenya, Mali, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, as well as new programs in Ukraine, Mongolia, and Honduras. The 70 million dollars we currently have invested in IDLO's ongoing programmatic work in the field is a testament to our belief in IDLO's ability to deliver results-driven, expertly crafted projects in the most complicated of environments.

With growth, however, comes the need for internal reflection on IDLO's part on how best to adapt and change organizational and management structures to fulfill its growing mandate. To this end, the United States views the Continuous Improvement Program as a positive step in improving organizational efficiency and decision making across the board. The Director General, as the leader of the organization, must ensure that all of IDLO's programmatic, financial and organizational expertise is being harnessed and that those in management positions across the organizational structure have the delegated authority to make the necessary decisions, especially during this period of transition as IDLO closes out its largest program to date. IDLO must not only respond to its Member Parties and donors through efficient communication and delivery of information and documentation, but it must also respond to the needs of its employees and contractors at headquarters, at its branch and liaison offices and in the field, ensuring their safety and ability to perform their duties. In short, we look to IDLO to model the good governance, accountability, and transparency it so successfully advances in the field.

We also look forward to continued updates to the Standing Committee and to the Assembly on the progress of the Continuous Improvement Program. For this organization to continue to flourish, IDLO's Member Parties must join together to support and guide the organization as it adapts to assume its role in global efforts to achieve sustainable development and the United States looks forward to a stronger partnership with you all in this effort.

Madame Director-General, thank you and your team for your laudable efforts over the last year to solidify the rule of law as an integral element of sustainable development and to continue to deliver results in the projects you implement. We look forward to the discussions of today and tomorrow as we consider IDLO's work on the ground, its successes over the last year, and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Thank you.