



Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies: SDG 16 implementation and the path towards leaving no one behind

27 – 29 May 2019

Rome, Italy

Session B1: *Sustainable Development through access to justice and the rule of law*

Date: 28 May 2019, 11:00 – 12:30

Description:

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law are explicitly or implicitly woven throughout Agenda 2030, through the specific inclusion of Goal 16 and its targets, and in particular target 16.3, and through the incorporation of the principles of equality, fairness, and due process across all 17 goals. Access to justice and the rule of law can play a catalyzing role in accelerating progress towards all seventeen SDGs. Their absence on the other hand, imposes significant costs on environmental, economic and social development and can fuel conflict and instability.

Progress towards goal 16, including target 16.3, has been uneven.¹ Closing the justice gap requires a transformation in ambition – a sustained effort to greatly multiply provision of access to justice in order to meet extensive legal needs. All countries must resolve people’s justice problems, prevent injustices large and small from occurring, and create opportunities for people to participate fully in their societies and economies. Dedicated national efforts and international development assistance lag far behind areas such as health and education and requires a new willingness to invest in justice systems and institutions that work for people and that are equipped to provide justice for all. The burden of injustice is not randomly distributed, with women, children, and marginalized groups finding it hardest to get access to justice.² And yet, access to justice is often critical for addressing some of the fundamental drivers of poverty and inequality, and for reducing risks of outbreak of violent conflict. Justice systems can be both a means of compounding poverty and inequality as well as a key to overcoming them and realizing people’s rights.³ Real and perceived injustice and inequalities between groups can also lead to social antagonisms and mobilization for collective violence, whenever inclusive institutions and effective dispute resolution mechanisms are lacking.

Against this background, this session illustrates how access to justice and the rule of law make specific contributions to peaceful and inclusive societies as a conduit for ensuring sustainable development gains. Providing access to justice and establishing the rule of law is not a simple technical exercise about drafting legislation, building courts and training police, it is a complex and long-term endeavour that requires navigating power dynamics, identifying potential sources of conflict and changing mindsets. To be successful, reforms must be politically-sensitive, locally owned and grounded in a solid understanding of the needs and the lived reality of justice seekers. This is especially true for those most vulnerable,

¹ The 2017-2018 WJP Rule of Law Index showed that more countries (34 percent) are declining in the overall rule of law score as compared to those that are improving (29 percent). See <https://worldjusticeproject.org/our-work/research-and-data/wjp-rule-law-index-2017%E2%80%932018>.

² See ‘[Justice for Women](#)’, Report of the High-level Group, UN Women, IDLO, World Bank and the Pathfinders.

³ See Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights (A/67/278).

marginalized and at risk of being left behind, such as children, for whom specialized services and outreach may be necessary to enable equitable access to justice. Achieving SDG 16 by 2030 is only possible if we accelerate our progress. To deliver on achieving more just societies, we must shift to a model that delivers measurable improvements in justice for all, placing people at the centre of the justice system and justice at the heart of sustainable development. This requires mobilizing greater political support, making a case for increased investment and being smarter and more effective about how we use existing resources, including through the use of inclusive and people-centred innovation and new technologies. This session will bring together experts from government, the judiciary, civil society, to take stock of progress, discuss emerging trends, identify good practices, and address how best to overcome challenges and accelerate progress on achieving access to justice and the rule of law as part of Agenda 2030.

The objectives of the session are to:

- Highlight the key role played by access to justice and rule of law in promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies and in enabling all seventeen sustainable development goals, including through target 16.3.
- Take stock of progress towards advancing access to justice and the rule of law globally, including identifying good practices, people-centered approaches, scalable and inclusive innovations as well as enabling factors and key challenges.
- Agree on key messages and takeaways on access to justice and rule of law and identify champions, platforms, events and opportunities to build momentum on justice leading up to HLPF and beyond.

Cross-cutting questions:

- 1) Which groups are being left behind in access to justice reforms and as beneficiaries of the rule of law?
- 2) How can we enhance data-driven monitoring and reporting processes to support evidence-based action?
- 3) What key interventions and policies can help us ensure that no one is left behind, and that initiatives to increase access to justice are reaching particular groups such as children, the youth, women and ethnic minorities?
- 4) How do access to justice and the rule of law help sustain peace, and what are the particular challenges facing crisis and conflict affected contexts in achieving SDG 16.3?
- 5) How do access to justice and the rule of law help advance economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development and empower women, children, young people and other marginalized groups to realize their rights?
- 6) What are examples of good practices and innovations that can help advance access to justice for those at risk of being left behind?
- 7) How can we demonstrate the value of investing in access to justice and the rule of law to policymakers and generate greater political and financial support for SDG 16.3?

IDLO, UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, UNODC, Pathfinders, and UNESCO have been facilitating the organization of this sessions