

STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

UN SUMMIT FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

United Nations

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Delivered by Irene Khan, Director-General, IDLO

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Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Excellences, distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the head of the only intergovernmental organization exclusively devoted to advancing the rule of law and development, I am honored to address this historic Summit.

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, requires 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.

As an organization that works on the ground to enable governments and empower people to reform laws and institutions, we are acutely aware of the challenges that face countries emerging from conflict, or striving towards democracy or seeking to build their economies. In practical terms it means drafting good constitutions; reforming laws and courts; empowering citizens; ensuring gender justice; regulating for fair access to services; promoting land policies that enhance food security and fiscal regimes that encourage foreign direct investment; and so on.

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.

It is no mere coincidence that in the icon for goal 16 that the UN has designed, the dove of peace is holding fast onto the gavel of justice. The message is clear: peace, progress and sustainability are built on the foundations of justice. Justice must come first.

Thank you.

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.