



**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION**  
**STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL, MS JAN BEAGLE**

**Report of the Director-General to the Assembly of Parties**

Rome, 28 November 2023

Deputy Secretary-General Lo Cascio,  
Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Colleagues and Friends.

I am pleased to present my report for 2023 to the Assembly of Parties. It is also the final report of my mandate as Director-General.

I am grateful to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, for hosting us once again.

I am also very appreciative of the strong messages of support from His Holiness Pope Francis and the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations.

As I mentioned in my first report to the Assembly in 2020, my objective on taking office was to strengthen IDLO's contribution to the global effort to build more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies.

The past year, like the three that preceded it, has been a tough test for the rule of law, justice, and human rights across the globe.

We have seen a storm of crises, including increasing conflicts and coups, devastating effects of climate change, massive food insecurity, growing inequalities, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

They have combined to impact decades of progress and put peace and sustainable development at risk.

According to the United Nations' latest SDG report, we are significantly off track to achieve the 2030 Agenda, having made progress on only 15 percent of the targets.

In 2022, for the fifth year in a row, most countries have regressed in the rule of law.



Since 2015, 68 percent of nations have declined on measures of constraints on government powers; 62 percent on measures to fight corruption; and 76 percent on fundamental rights.

There have been massive violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in all regions.

In the face of these global crises, it is my firm belief that IDLO's mandate has never been more relevant or needed.

This year's SDG 16 Conference, IDLO's flagship policy advocacy event organized in partnership with the Government of Italy and UN DESA, explored these issues.

The multistakeholder discussions highlighted the critical importance of the rule of law, incorporated in SDG 16, in responding to crises of conflict, climate change, and food systems.

For those who missed it, I want to share a short video with some highlights that encapsulate IDLO's approach.

**[video plays]**

While IDLO has faced many challenges over the past four years, I am pleased to report that the Organization has been able to make good progress on its mission to promote the catalytic role of the rule of law.

We have been able to adapt rapidly to changing circumstances, drawing on deep networks and relationships of trust, to find entry points, and help people and governments address priority justice needs.

Our approach combining programming, research, and policy advocacy, has helped position IDLO as a prominent champion for the rule of law, and SDG 16.

The three guiding principles of integration, inclusion and innovation have been key to our work.

My report to the Assembly describes IDLO's achievements and challenges in 2023 in detail.

Today I would like to highlight five major trends that have characterized IDLO's trajectory since Member Parties entrusted me with the leadership of the organization.



These are:

- Advancing people-centred justice in increasingly fragile and complex environments;
- Promoting rule of law solutions to major development challenges;
- Reducing the justice gap for women and girls;
- Investing in our people, and systems, to improve results and provide a foundation for sustained growth; and
- Expanding partnerships to mobilize political and financial support for the rule of law.

Let me briefly share how each of these trends have shaped IDLO's work and evolution as an organization.

### 1. **Advancing people-centred justice in fragile and complex environments**

Firstly, IDLO developed its current Strategic Plan in 2020, the year I started as Director-General, at a time of great disruption and a fast-changing external environment.

The Plan is designed to maximize IDLO's ability to address existing global challenges, while providing flexibility to tackle new and emerging issues.

It is based on the concept of 'people-centred justice' and guided by the understanding that people around the world use diverse pathways to seek redress for wrongs and to resolve their disputes.

It emphasizes that justice systems must be built around a better understanding of people's needs and respect for their human rights.

People-centred justice prioritizes reforms and innovations that will close the justice gap, lead to greater access and inclusion, and produce fairer and more satisfactory outcomes for the end user.

This means working from the "bottom up" to empower justice seekers.

For instance, IDLO's Community Justice Programme in **Uganda** seeks to enhance access to justice for women, children, and vulnerable communities.

This involves supporting legal aid service providers and paralegals and raising legal awareness through public outreach campaigns.



As a result of this support, the resolution time for civil matters has been significantly reduced and thousands of justice seekers have been able to resolve their disputes within three months, where previously it took over two years on average.

IDLO also works from the “top down” to make laws and institutions more effective and responsive to people’s needs and respectful of their human rights.

We partner with justice institutions to help them to uphold rights and provide essential services.

A good example is Liberia, where IDLO is supporting efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

Over the past year, IDLO supported the development of Liberia’s Annual Trafficking in Persons Report, facilitated community events to identify risks associated with human trafficking, developed capacity-building materials, and evaluated potential safe homes in TIP hotspots.

This work is complemented by IDLO’s new sub-regional programme on countering Trafficking in Persons in the Mano River Union, which also covers **Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone.**

As the world becomes more volatile and conflicts continue to proliferate, more than half of IDLO’s work is now carried out in fragile settings.

While these are some of the most complex and challenging environments, they are also where people most need the protection of the law.

In IDLO’s experience, development is not a linear process and is often subject to setbacks.

It is important to stay engaged where possible, to protect the most vulnerable, preserve gains, and lay the foundations for the future.

Opportunities for positive change can exist in even the most difficult situations.

A good illustration is **Afghanistan**, which has been IDLO’s largest Country Programme from the time the organization started to have significant work at the country level.

Since August 2021, our priority has been to ensure the safety and security of our staff, while supporting the Afghan people where possible.

We resumed operations in 2022, reopening our Kabul Office in May.



Despite narrowing public space and increased scrutiny by the de facto authorities, IDLO has found entry points.

Our primary focus has been on supporting justice seekers, particularly women and other vulnerable groups, through non-state service providers and community justice systems.

This year IDLO has conducted a Justice Sector Context Assessment across the country to determine the current state of the justice system, including the role of customary and informal justice actors, the status of women's access to justice, and the conditions of defence lawyers,

IDLO has also developed the Afghanistan Rule of Law Observatory (ARLO), an online database of recent developments in the justice system for use by non-state justice service providers.

We have completed a trends analysis of the operational status and challenges facing the remaining CSOs in the country and are working reinforce their capacity.

IDLO's programme in the Sahel seeks to improve respect for human rights and to increase public trust in the criminal justice chains in **Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger**.

In the face of growing instability and democratic backsliding, IDLO has strengthened its support to CSOs and national human rights institutions.

They can play an important role in ensuring oversight of the criminal justice system, as well as in empowering justice seekers to report human rights violations.

In **Burkina Faso**, for instance, IDLO trained lawyers to use international legal instruments in national proceedings and to refer cases to international bodies.

One hundred opinion leaders, chiefs, and religious figures were sensitized about legal aid mechanisms.

We also enhanced legal awareness for journalists and civil society members, particularly youth and women, and organized radio programmes connecting people with legal aid providers.

At a time of narrowing civic space, we work to promote participatory decision-making at the grassroots level.

In response to security-related access to justice challenges in **Mali**, IDLO supported the relocation of correctional hearings from Gundam to Timbuktu, resulting in increased resolution of cases.



We facilitated a meeting between the court in Gao and CSOs to discuss the functioning of the justice system and the difficulties faced by magistrates in the unstable security environment.

The parties agreed to collaborate on interactive radio broadcasts focusing on access to justice and gender-based violence (GBV).

Before operations were paused in July, IDLO assisted the Ministry of Justice of **Niger** in enhancing coordination across the criminal justice chain.

We also worked with the National Agency for Legal and Judicial Assistance to provide legal aid to over 500 defendants, and supported judicial inspection missions in penitentiaries to address case backlogs and reduce prolonged detention, resulting in legal judgments in several hundred cases.

IDLO recently resumed programming in Niger and is committed to remaining in the country and adapting our programmes to fit the evolving situation, if possible.

The war in **Ukraine**, in contrast, highlighted the need for increased institutional support.

Since opening its Office in Kyiv in 2015, IDLO has worked to promote reforms to combat corruption and promote greater integrity in justice institutions.

In the aftermath of the invasion, we drew on our knowledge of the national context and existing networks and partnerships to quickly pivot our work to meet priority justice needs.

This included support for strengthened national capacities in key areas, including addressing suspected violations of International Humanitarian Law, and International Criminal Law.

One and a half years later, IDLO continues to support the Office of the Prosecutor General and other partners, to enhance their institutional resilience and services.

We have also continued to assist Ukraine on accountability issues.

IDLO participated in the high-level international conference “United for Justice” in Lviv, organized by OPG, which was attended by Attorneys General and Ministers of Justice from several countries.

IDLO is also a partner of the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group.

This is an important area of work, and I signed an agreement just two weeks ago to expand our cooperation on accountability for conflict-related sexual violence and crimes against children.



IDLO has maintained its support to the government of Ukraine on combatting corruption, recognizing the key role of anti-corruption efforts for a successful post-conflict recovery.

In the past year, we helped re-establish the High Council of Justice, responsible for appointing and managing judges.

Our support extended to enhancing the institutional independence of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU).

On the policy front, IDLO contributed to legislative efforts to strengthen alignment with the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention and establish Liability for Corruption Crimes for Legal Entities.

Corruption is corrosive to public trust and an increasing impediment to peace and sustainable development.

Tackling it has emerged as a growing priority for our partners.

IDLO takes a multi-track approach to the problem.

We build capacity to investigate and prosecute corruption, counter illicit financial flows, and recover assets.

We also promote preventive measures, including increasing transparency and integrity in the judiciary and public sector and strengthening the monitoring role of civil society.

Drawing on our experience in Ukraine, IDLO carried out technical and legal assessments to facilitate the competitive selection of anti-corruption investigators and prosecutors in Armenia.

We recently began to assist **Moldova** in implementing an extraordinary vetting mechanism for prosecutors, one of the key recommendations made by the European Commission for Moldova's EU accession negotiations.

In **Mongolia**, IDLO facilitated the development of the new National Anti-Corruption Programme and the development of a handbook on Mutual Legal Assistance.

We continued to support the Financial Reporting Centre of **Somalia**, which has become an important part of the government's efforts to disrupt the financing of Al-Shabaab.

At the policy advocacy level, IDLO participated in the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group meetings in India and a meeting of the Italian Coordination Task Force on Anti-Corruption, chaired by the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs.



We are grateful to the Italian Government for including IDLO in the G20 Working Group during its Presidency, and appreciate that this partnership has continued under the Presidencies of Indonesia and India.

In line with our people-centred approach, a significant part of IDLO's work involves engagement with Customary and Informal Justice systems, which serve as the primary means of dispute resolution worldwide.

While customary and informal justice systems can help to significantly accelerate access to justice because of their speed, local legitimacy and low cost, they often do not fully recognize the rights of women, youth, and minorities.

IDLO partners with such systems to promote reforms that increase respect for human rights and protection for women, youth, and other vulnerable groups.

For example, IDLO has worked in **Somalia** for several years to help strengthen the delivery of justice services through State and non-State institutions.

As part of these efforts, we provided technical assistance to 19 Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Centres in Somalia, which primarily address civil disputes and minor offenses.

When the centres first started operating, we noticed that women were not using their services.

To address this, female paralegals have been embedded in each Centre to support legal awareness, community outreach, and referrals, particularly for disputes involving women.

In the past year alone, the ADR Centres have handled 7000 cases and received several thousand calls through their associated hotlines.

Almost half the cases were brought by women.

Issues that cannot be solved at the Centres, or fall outside their jurisdiction, are channelled to district courts.

Formal district courts in many locations have begun referring cases to the new Centres where appropriate.

We are currently assisting in the development of the country's first National ADR Strategy.

Our work on Customary and Informal Justice is a good illustration of IDLO's integrated approach.





Our research draws on insights and lessons learned from our work on the ground, which are then used in our policy advocacy at global, national, and regional levels.

IDLO recently published a major report, “Diverse Pathways to People-Centred Justice”, on behalf of the Working Group on CIJ and SDG16+.

I was pleased to moderate the high-level launch event during the International Law Week in New York in October.

IDLO also released a publication on “Women's Participation and Leadership in CIJ Systems” which offers evidence-based recommendations to enhance women's representation.

An increasingly important area is our work at the intersection of justice, rights, and technology.

As the role of technology in the justice sector increases, we work to promote more equitable digital innovation to increase efficiency and effectiveness, while ensuring access for those who would otherwise be at risk of being left behind.

In response to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, we supported justice institutions to develop nationally owned digital justice solutions.

For instance, in **Kenya**, we supported the implementation of digital systems to reduce case adjudication times and strengthen transparency and efficiency.

These include electronic case filing, online court fee payments, and case retrieval and tracking mechanisms.

The e-filing system is part of a wider package of interventions geared towards leveraging technology to enhance access to justice through the courts.

As technologies like AI continue to transform virtually all aspects of society, the significance of rights-based approaches is only going to increase.

In June, we co-hosted an event in the Hague on “Gender and Artificial Intelligence in Justice, Peace, and Security” with the Embassies of Cyprus and Switzerland.

Organized in partnership with the International Gender Champions, and Women Leading in AI, the event emphasized the significance of inclusivity and diversity in the application of advanced technologies.



## 2. Promoting rule of law solutions to major development challenges

The second trend I want to highlight is IDLO's growing work to help partners deliver tangible development outcomes through the rule of law.

As Member Parties will recall, IDLO's Strategic Plan is anchored in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

IDLO views SDG 16 and SDG 5 as a prism through which the rule of law can help drive and accelerate progress across the entire 2030 Agenda.

Effective laws and institutions, and empowered people and communities, are needed to implement all seventeen SDGs, from ending poverty and hunger, to promoting climate justice.

A relatively new element in IDLO's Strategic Plan was the emphasis on realizing this broader contribution of the rule of law to different dimensions of peace and sustainable development.

We have focused on three priority areas where IDLO has relevant expertise, and identified entry points where the organization can add value.

These are inclusive economic development, climate justice and the sustainable use of natural resources, and public health.

While this work remains a relatively small part of our portfolio, I firmly believe that IDLO has been able to demonstrate and, in some cases, play a pioneering role in promoting rule of law solutions to some of the biggest development challenges.

### *Inclusive economic development*

Clear and effective economic and commercial legal frameworks promote trade, investment, and economic growth.

They provide stability and certainty for businesses and investors, enhance competition, and help resolve disputes fairly and expeditiously.

Promoting inclusive economic development through the rule of law was at the genesis of IDLO 40 years ago and we continue to work around the world to help countries unlock their development potential.

In a number of contexts, we are promoting mediation and Alternate Dispute Resolution as a means for resolving commercial disputes to reduce the burden on courts and increase speed and efficiency.



For example, IDLO has supported the expansion of Court-Annexed Mediation in Kenya, reducing overall turnaround time for resolving disputes and unlocking nearly USD 57 million which would otherwise be tied up in litigation.

We also supported the Kenyan judiciary in the development of small claims courts, which help resolve low value civil disputes quickly.

During a recent mission to Kenya, I was able to see their work first hand and was impressed by the impact they are already having in reducing case backlogs and building trust in communities.

Cases brought to the Small Claims Court must be heard within 60 days and are currently resolved in an average of 37.

Supporting least developed countries has been a key priority.

Since 2019, the Investment Support Programme for Least Developed Countries (ISP/LDCs) has responded to requests for support from many LDCs, and demand for its services continues to grow.

This public private partnership, which is referred to in the Doha Programme of Action, has provided assistance on investment-related matters in several countries during 2023 including Mauritania, Rwanda, Senegal and Somalia.

Drawing on its experience, IDLO published an issue brief on “A Rule of Law Approach to Inclusive Economic Development.”

In March, I led IDLO’s delegation to the Fifth United Nations Conference for the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) in Doha.

It was an important opportunity for IDLO to highlight the role of the rule of law in accelerating sustainable development in LDC contexts, including by contributing to an attractive business climate, making development more inclusive, and combatting climate change and environmental degradation.

I participated in the Rome Symposium on the World Openness Report, jointly organized by the Hongqiao International Economic Forum Secretariat, the Italy-China Council Foundation, and the Embassy of China.



### *Climate justice and sustainable use of natural resources*

Promoting climate justice was perhaps the newest addition to IDLO's portfolio in the current strategic cycle.

Over the past three years, we have worked to develop and scale up our work in this crucial area.

We produced an initial policy brief on Climate Justice, highlighting the link between justice and climate change.

It proposes concrete recommendations to advance transformative climate action grounded in the rule of law and human rights.

Since then, IDLO has developed a growing portfolio of work.

For example, we worked to enhance land security in Rwanda by strengthening public confidence in the registration of land transactions.

A High-Level Regional Conference on Land, Governance and Conflict in the East and Horn of Africa, co-organized by IDLO and IGAD last year, resulted in a joint ministerial communique from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda, including a "Transformative Agenda to reduce conflict and secure land rights."

We are increasingly focused on the critical link between gender equality and climate action.

IDLO has been championing a feminist approach to climate justice at global and regional policy forums, including Stockholm+50, the Commission on the Status of Women, the UNFCCC COPs, and in support of the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality.

We have started piloting this approach at the country level and are currently conducting gender assessments of legal and policy frameworks on climate issues in **Burkina Faso** and the **Philippines**.

We are also working to increase the capacity of key stakeholders to understand climate change-related laws and regulations and participate in policymaking.

In recognition of these efforts, the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Feminist Action for Climate Justice (FACJ) has invited IDLO to become a Coalition Leader, making IDLO the first commitment maker asked to assume a leadership role.



Drawing on our research and country level experience, we have produced several publications to highlight the link between climate action and the rule of law, including a recent brief on “Rule of Law Approach to Climate Insecurity”.

Based on case studies from **Burundi, Indonesia, Rwanda, and Somalia**, the research demonstrates how people-centred justice interventions can respond to risks of insecurity and conflict arising from climate change.

We also continued our advocacy on climate justice through participation in multilateral dialogues and other global events.

I led IDLO’s delegation to COP26 in Glasgow and COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, where we aimed to highlight the interlinkages between the rule of law, human rights, gender equality, and climate action and to keep “climate justice” high on the agenda.

The progressive inclusion of climate justice in COP political declarations and its increasing use by governments, the United Nations and other stakeholders, is an encouraging sign, and an important measure of success for our advocacy in this area.

We are currently preparing to build on this momentum at COP28 in Dubai.

IDLO also participated in the UN Convention on Biological Diversity COP15 in Montreal, emphasizing the catalytic role of rule of law approaches in implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

In September, we took part in the Africa Climate Summit and the Africa Climate Week in Nairobi, organized by the Kenyan Government, the African Union Commission and the UNFCCC.

We also participated in the Bi-annual Africa Land Conference organized by the African Union and the African Development Bank in Addis Ababa this month.

Food security has become an increasingly important issue on the international agenda.

IDLO remains committed to promote rule of law approaches to food systems transformation.

The pilot phase of the project “Food Security and the Rule of Law in Time of Emergencies”, implemented in partnership with FAO in Honduras and Uganda, has been completed.

Lessons learned from this experience will be reflected in a joint IDLO-FAO knowledge product, to be published soon.



We have also released a policy brief on “Rule of Law for Food Systems Transformation”, providing policymakers with recommendations for incorporating rule of law mechanisms into food systems.

We are exploring opportunities to secure additional resources for future work in this important area.

We are also enhancing our engagement with global food platforms.

The United Nations Food Systems Summit and pre-Summit meetings were important opportunities to highlight the link between the rule of law and inclusive and sustainable food systems transformations.

This July, we participated in the UNFSS+2 Stocktaking Moment, and I met with the Director-General of FAO to explore future collaboration.

This year IDLO took part in the FAO Conference for the first time and joined the Committee on World Food Security as an observer.

IDLO also participated in the second Arab Forum on “Equality: One Voice, Quality in Food Security” in Beirut, and in the “Climate Security and Migration in the Mediterranean” event, organized by CGIAR.

### *Public health*

IDLO has continued working at the nexus of health, sustainable development, and the rule of law, which gained significant emphasis following the COVID-19 pandemic.

IDLO’s Pandemic Preparedness and Response Project, developed in collaboration with WHO, aims to strengthen legal and policy frameworks to prevent and respond to public health emergencies.

Under the pilot phase, IDLO supported the Government of Uganda in reviewing several pieces of legislation, and the Government of Zambia to draft statutory instruments to align their legal frameworks with the International Health Regulations.

IDLO’s Global RECAP Programme seeks to strengthen the capacity of countries to promote healthy diets and increase physical activity for the prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases.



IDLO is supporting civil society to carry out advocacy and community education projects in Bangladesh, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda and is in the process of expanding the Programme to additional countries.

Our issue brief on “Preventing Pandemics Through the Rule of Law” was launched at the High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Preparedness and Response in New York in September.

I was pleased to sign an MOU with Dr. Tedros recently to strengthen our cooperation with WHO.

IDLO secured Observer Status at the World Health Assembly in 2022, and we participated in this capacity for the first time this May.

IDLO has become a member of the Global Health Security Agenda Legal Preparedness Action Package, an initiative led by the United States, Argentina, and the O’Neill Institute, to advocate for coordinated international action around legal preparedness for public health emergencies.

We also participated in the meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board in June. Our intervention emphasized the need for attention to the rule of law as a key tool to address inequalities, including through improved legal services, legal literacy, and empowerment.

### **3. Reducing the Justice Gap for Women and Girls**

Justice for women is first and foremost a human right, reflected in international treaties and conventions.

Evidence also shows that investing in justice for women produces high returns in human development, economic growth, and peace.

As an International Gender Champion, closing the gender justice gap is a personal priority for me.

IDLO integrates gender equality throughout its work, complementing gender mainstreaming with focused interventions to address key justice challenges faced by women and girls.

An important area, where we work in partnership with UN Women, is promoting equality in law and in practice.

We support the repeal or reform of discriminatory laws and policies and implementation of gender equality provisions in national legal frameworks.



In **Kenya, Mali, the Philippines, and Sierra Leone**, IDLO has conducted assessments to identify discriminatory laws and practices and supported multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity building to facilitate legal reform.

Another major focus is promoting survivor centric approaches to combat gender-based violence.

In response to the rise in GBV during the pandemic, IDLO adapted its programming to address the increased demand for support and services.

This included rapid reaction initiatives like supporting one stop service centres and shelters in Mongolia, and to assisting a legal aid hotline for GBV survivors in Tunisia.

We have continued to promote holistic approaches.

The overarching goal is to establish a uniform, victim-centred approach for handling GBV cases through streamlining processes, and providing better support and case resolution times.

In **Kenya** for example, IDLO supported the establishment of specialized Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Courts.

In **Mongolia**, IDLO piloted mobile GBV clinics, which provided over 1200 survivors with primary legal advice, psychological counselling, and referral services.

We recently launched a research study on Survivor-centred Justice for GBV in Complex Situations, developed in partnership with George Washington University.

It includes case studies from **Afghanistan, Honduras, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, South Sudan, and Tunisia** and provides perspectives on the complexity of accessing justice and addressing GBV in situations involving conflict, organized crime, climate disasters, and health emergencies.

IDLO is a strong supporter of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign.

As in previous years, we are partnering with heads of UN Agencies and other partners in the UNITE Campaign to Stand Together to End Violence Against Women and Girls

IDLO promotes the active participation and leadership of women professionals in all parts of the justice sector.





For over a decade, IDLO's largest programme of work on gender equality has been in Afghanistan.

While women's right to participate in all aspects of public life, including the justice sector, has been severely curtailed, Afghan women continue to fight for equality.

In 2023, in **Afghanistan**, IDLO conducted sessions on women's labour rights, bringing together women jurists, professors, and traditional leaders to assess the challenges that women and girls have been facing since the introduction of new restrictions, as well as solutions and opportunities.

The discussions are a unique platform for Afghan women to exchange best practices and empower each other.

IDLO remains committed to nurturing this potential in Afghanistan and beyond, and continues to support women's organizations and advocates to the extent possible.

We started a new initiative this year aimed at enhancing professional expertise of women working in the law enforcement sector in Liberia.

We also advocated for women's active participation in justice delivery at international and regional levels.

IDLO works closely with the national chapters of the International Association of Women Judges in several countries.

And in 2022, IDLO was a co-organizer of the 17th International Women Judges Association Africa Region Conference in **Uganda**, as part of East Africa Justice Week.

IDLO continued to highlight the fundamental importance of justice for women and girls through our participation in major events, including the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Generation Equality Forum.

This year we participated in the Women Deliver Conference in Kigali. Held once every four years, this year's edition focused on Spaces, Solidarity, and Solutions.

During the second Shaping Feminist Foreign Policies Conference, hosted this year by the Netherlands, IDLO co-organized a side event "A Feminist Foreign Policy Inspired by Grassroots Perspectives", together with UN Women, GROOTS Kenya, and Stand4HerLand.



As part of the Justice Action Coalition, we are working on the development of a Financing Justice for Women Report in partnership with UN Women, the World Bank, Pathfinders, and other organizations.

The report aims to enhance the understanding of the need for increased investment in preventing and addressing intimate partner violence.

#### **4. Investing in our people and systems**

The fourth trend I want to highlight is the significant investment we have made in IDLO's people, systems, and processes, to better deliver on our mandate.

The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 was a severe stress test of IDLO's operations.

Like others, my foremost priority in 2020 was to protect the health and well-being of colleagues, while continuing to carry out IDLO's critical work around the world.

As the scope of COVID-19 became apparent, I acted quickly to establish a Crisis Management Team to ensure situational awareness and timely crisis response.

Business Continuity Plans were developed for all offices. Colleagues adapted their work to the evolving context and continued to deliver in some of the most complex and challenging working environments - challenges which have only expanded since the pandemic.

Learning from that experience, we have taken several steps to ensure that IDLO's systems, capacities and resource base are robust, resilient, and fit for purpose.

Strengthening programme quality and integration, and developing our knowledge base, became an important priority.

The transition from a project-based implementation model to a more programmatic approach is underway.

IDLO has adopted a more integrated approach to programme development.

We are also taking steps to systematically include a Human Rights Based Approach and to develop context-specific country strategies.

IDLO's Strategic Results and Resources Framework, or SRRF, translates the Strategic Plan into a set of development and organizational results.



This is the organization's first attempt at strengthening results-based management by implementing a quantitative, results monitoring system, and is being implemented in a phased approach.

We have now completed data collection for 2021 and 2022 and lessons from the exercise are being used to strengthen the Organization's results focus and internal monitoring capacity.

Cross-departmental "Thematic Clusters" are continuing to enhance thematic focus and cross-organizational collaboration in priority areas.

As a specialized knowledge-based organization, our staff is IDLO's most important resource.

Since I became Director-General, we have looked closely at IDLO's human resources systems, policies, and procedures, to develop a comprehensive human resources strategy.

I am pleased to report that gender parity has been achieved in IDLO's senior management.

Women now constitute 50% of the Senior Leadership Team compared to 20% in 2020.

I have also introduced a systematic change management process to strengthen the management culture and enhance staff engagement organization wide.

I was very pleased to organize the first week-long gathering of all our Country Managers in Rome this year.

Our field-based colleagues had the opportunity to discuss issues of strategic importance with senior management and headquarters staff and review progress in the implementation of IDLO's Strategic Plan.

We have developed a new cloud-based recruitment platform, which improves user experience and streamlines the hiring process, and begun work on a competency framework.

A revised code of conduct and a more transparent grievance handling process have been issued.

A long overdue organisation-wide salary survey was undertaken, and its results have been implemented in a phased manner.

Further investments in internal learning have been put in place to strengthen capacity and professional development.



And at a time of increased stress related to working in challenging operating environments, promoting mental health and wellness in the workplace is also a priority.

As part of our commitment to improve organisational efficiency and accountability over the course of the strategic cycle, we have invested in updates to systems and business processes to better align them with institutional needs and priorities.

Following a pilot period in select countries, a new procurement module has been integrated within IDLO's Enterprise Resource Platform, to support greater transparency and accountability.

IDLO has also updated its Financial Management Framework and strengthened its policies on ICT security, procurement, budgeting, and working with implementing partners.

I am pleased that IDLO has become an observer in the United Nations system's interagency bodies on finance and budget, human resources management, and procurement, which allows us to learn from other organizations' experiences.

In this context, we have also secured participation in the United Nations Global Marketplace, enabling the organization to connect with reputable suppliers, streamline processes, and achieve cost savings.

A major accomplishment was the successful completion of the Pillar Assessment conducted by the European Commission, certifying the effectiveness of IDLO's systems, rules, and procedures for control and protection.

My foremost priority is ensuring our staff's safety and wellbeing.

At a time of elevated risks and instability, IDLO continues to monitor the situation in Afghanistan, the Sahel, Somalia, Ukraine and other contexts, and has implemented country-specific mitigation measures to safeguard our staff and operations.

IDLO continues to prioritize efforts to secure recognition of its legal status as an intergovernmental organization, including through Host Country Agreements (HCAs).

HCAs are indispensable in facilitating our operations in a country and provide a solid basis for expanding IDLO's partnerships.

We have made significant progress, signing agreements in the past year with the Bahamas, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ukraine.

IDLO has also made progress in the negotiation of HCAs with several other countries.



I would like to thank all members, particularly the United States, for their support throughout the negotiation processes.

Diversifying IDLO's resource base, particularly to increase core contributions, is essential to making critical investments in the organization.

While I am pleased to have increased the percentage of core to non-core funding over the past four years from 16 percent in 2019 to 22 percent in 2023, IDLO is still dependent on a narrow group of partners for both core and non-core funding.

I am very grateful to our major donors who have been dedicated, long-term supporters of the organization.

Bringing in new sources of funding is a key priority and we have initiated discussions with several development partners.

In a difficult financial environment, it would strengthen my position as DG immensely, if IDLO's Member Parties expressed their confidence in the organization, through voluntary contributions, in accordance with their capacity.

## **5. Expanding Partnerships**

Finally, I consider partnerships to be key to IDLO's success.

Throughout my report are examples of how IDLO has been able to pool expertise and resources, strengthen convening power, and leverage our impact through partnerships with likeminded organisations.

Strengthening IDLO's outreach to partners, including Member Parties and partner countries, judiciaries, the UN system and other international organizations, civil society, academia, youth, and the private sector has therefore been a priority.

We have built new partnerships and deepened existing ones.

I have engaged extensively with Member Parties in capitals, as well as in Rome, Geneva, and New York, to thank them for their support and partnership.

IDLO expanded its membership in 2023, with Niger becoming our 38th Member Party.

Discussions are ongoing with several more States to promote a balanced growth in IDLO's membership.



We have also created new forums for consultation and exchange.

For instance, we have begun an annual Strategic Dialogue between IDLO and the United States to discuss priorities, review progress in key areas, and explore future opportunities.

We have strengthened our links with the United Nations system through cooperation with UN entities on programming, research, and policy advocacy.

Our many partners in the UN System include the UN Secretariat, FAO, IFAD, IOM, ITU, OHCHR, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNICEF, UNICRI, UNHCR, UNODC, UN Women, WFP and WHO.

In addition to its outreach to FAO, WFP and IFAD on food security and nutrition, IDLO has also deepened its engagement with other Rome-Based Agencies including UNIDROIT and ICCROM.

I was honoured to have a private audience with His Holiness Pope Francis in September. We discussed our shared commitment to advancing justice, the rule of law, gender equality, and supporting the most vulnerable.

Since securing the pillar assessment in 2022, we have been actively strengthening our partnership with the European Union.

Notably, IDLO was selected to co-lead the Working Group on Accountability and Rule of Law, Access to Justice, Anti-Corruption, and Transparency within the EU Team Europe Democracy Network.

We are currently building in-house capacities to partner with the EU at the operational level.

We also advanced discussions with the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development, the OPEC Fund, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Qatar Fund for Development.

#### *Advocating for political and financial support for the rule of law*

IDLO's advocacy is a key part of our integrated approach and an important way that the organization contributes to strengthening political and financial support for the rule of law.

I have already mentioned the SDG 16 Conference, which has become an important forum for multistakeholder dialogue.



The key messages of the Conference were, at the request of Italy, circulated by the Secretary-General to all UN Member States as a joint General Assembly and ECOSOC document, and helped to inform the High-Level Political Forum and the SDG Summit.

We have also provided submissions to several multilateral processes and delivered statements at the consultations, including the Political Declaration for the SDG Summit; the New Agenda for Peace; the Declaration on Future Generations; the Global Digital Compact; and the High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response.

In May, I was invited by the President of ECOSOC to deliver the opening remarks at a Special Meeting she organized, focusing on "Harnessing the Game-Changing Potential of SDG16".

This event provided an opportunity to reflect on the catalytic power of SDG16 to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

I was also invited by the President of ECOSOC to moderate the thematic review of SDG 9 during the HLPF in July.

During High-Level Week at the UN General Assembly, we built on this work to advocate for the rule of law and access to justice in different policy forums.

I addressed the Leadership Dialogue on "Strengthening integrated policies and public institutions for achieving the SDGs".

We also delivered statements at the High-level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response and the Ministerial Meeting to prepare for the Summit of the Future, to make a case for greater political and financial support for the rule of law.

Last month I met with the incoming Presidents of the General Assembly and ECOSOC.

IDLO also deepened its engagement with the Human Rights Council and the international community in Geneva.

I represented IDLO at the High-Level Opening of the 52nd Session of the Human Rights Council and IDLO has been an active participant in the sessions of the Council throughout the year.

This year also marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of IDLO's Liaison Office in Geneva.

To commemorate this milestone, we organized a series of events to promote IDLO, its mandate, and our partnerships in Geneva.



I was pleased to join a high-level event on the “Rule of Law as a critical tool for Rights, Development and Peace”.

IDLO is an active member of several networks, advancing our global positioning, and contributing our expertise.

We continued our engagement with the Justice Action Coalition and participated in the Ministerial Level meeting of the Coalition hosted by the Netherlands in June.

IDLO became a member of the World Bank’s Justice and Rule of Law Partner Network and took part in its inaugural partner meeting.

We welcome the increased involvement of the Bank in this area.

IDLO joined the Rule of Law and People-Centred Justice cohort of the Summit for Democracy and contributed to the group’s Joint Statement and Call to Action.

In May, I participated in the Tashkent Law Spring event alongside Ministers from Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Singapore, as well as other global leaders.

IDLO took part for the first time in the Mo Ibrahim Foundation’s Governance Weekend in Nairobi.

In November, IDLO co-organized the annual conference of the Dutch Knowledge Platform on Security and Rule of Law in Nairobi.

## **6. Looking Ahead**

This year, as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of IDLO (or IDLI as it was initially known), we celebrate the many accomplishments of the organization and the strong partnerships in support of justice and the rule of law that we have been able to build.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your unwavering dedication to IDLO’s mission and for the strong support I have received as Director-General.

My gratitude goes to all Member Parties, and particularly to members of the Standing Committee, and the Audit and Finance Committee, for their counsel and commitment to IDLO.





The annual meetings of our Board of Advisers have been a valuable source of expertise and guidance.

I am most grateful to our partners who have prioritized the rule of law in their countries, and provided development assistance during a time of disruption and economic uncertainty.

I also want to thank my IDLO colleagues who work tirelessly in difficult circumstances around the world.

The results presented in my report would not have been possible without them.

At the same time, there is no room for complacency.

A challenging external environment has reinforced the relevance of our mandate.

We need to leverage our four decades of experience in over 90 countries, our trusted networks, our multistakeholder convening power, and our thought leadership on SDG16 and the rule of law in its broadest sense.

We need to continue to increase global awareness of the linkages between the rule of law, human rights, peace and sustainable development.

As our Strategic Plan comes to an end, IDLO will develop a new Plan for the next strategic cycle in 2024.

We are determined to build on our strengths, deepen and expand our partnerships, and engage where we can add the most value in the shared project to build and sustain peace and accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda.

We will continue to explore rule of law solutions to global challenges from achieving gender equality, to addressing climate change, and ensuring the responsible use of frontier technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence.

Achieving these objectives will require further investment in IDLO's people and systems and will need sustained political will and expanded financial support at national and international levels.

Real change will only be possible if we work together across sectors, across societies, and across the world.

I look forward to working with you all to build a more peaceful, just and sustainable future.