

**43rd SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT**

**Statement by Jan Beagle, Director-General
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It is an honour for me to address this Council as the Director-General of the International Development Law Organization. IDLO is the only international intergovernmental organisation dedicated exclusively to the promotion of human rights, peace and sustainable development, through the rule of law.

I should like to thank High Commissioner Bachelet and her team for their important work and for the vision that she has expressed for the rule of law and justice as an essential foundation for the realisation of human rights. As other speakers have noted, human rights are under pressure in many parts of the world and the rule of law is being eroded.

Yet, now is the time to realise the potential power of the rule of law to advance human rights, justice and human dignity. As the Secretary-General stressed in his Call to Action, a human rights-based approach, oriented around peaceful and just societies and respect for the rule of law, delivers development that is more lasting and inclusive.

For this reason, full implementation of SDG 16 on peace, justice and accountable institutions is vital for the protection of human rights and the realisation of the entire 2030 Agenda. IDLO employs a dual approach in its work in all regions of the world, including in some of the poorest and most fragile countries, as well as in middle-income countries.

We work from the “top-down” with governments to strengthen laws and institutions, helping to make them more effective, accessible and accountable; to fight corruption and discrimination; and to build judicial independence and legal capacity.

At the same time, IDLO works from the “bottom-up”, to empower citizens to access justice and claim their rights; to build trust between justice providers and seekers; and to promote inclusive policy making.

For example, in Mali, dialogue between civil society and state actors has been facilitated to strengthen the criminal justice chain, contributing to peacebuilding efforts in the country. IDLO is now expanding this approach more broadly in the Sahel region.

In Tunisia, IDLO supports capacity building for judges and other justice professionals in commercial and economic law, thereby helping to promote economic rights and sustainable development.

In Afghanistan, IDLO has worked with the Attorney General’s Office to establish specialised units to investigate and prosecute gender-based violence, as well as providing legal support to a network of shelters for victims.

Our experience shows that national ownership is key to effective institution building. For this reason, IDLO is respectful of different legal systems, operating under the principle of legal pluralism, while upholding international human rights standards. While much has been achieved, much remains to be done to mobilise political commitment and financial investment at the scale required.

According to a recent report, over two-thirds of the world's population do not have meaningful access to justice. At the same time, Official Development Assistance in the justice sector has been declining.

In particular, after twenty-five years of mixed progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, we must close the justice gap for women and girls as a matter of urgency and tackle the multiple and overlapping layers of legal, economic, social, and cultural discrimination.

Rule of law and justice systems are among the best investments that can be made to enable peace, human rights and sustainable development.

Globally, the demand for rule of law and justice is high and growing, but the supply is not keeping up. We believe that the justice sector deserves the same attention as other critical sectors in terms of ambition and scale, and both domestic and international financing.

To help build coalitions for action around the rule of law, IDLO, together with the Government of Italy and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, has launched an annual conference on SDG 16. Last year the results contributed to the review of SDG 16 at the High-level Political Forum.

This year, as we enter the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs, the conference will be held in Rome, in June, on the theme of “*Accelerating SDG 16 Implementation through Transformative Governance*”.

My organisation welcomes the Council's increasing focus on the rule of law, including dedicating the next Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law to the theme of “*Access to justice for all*”.

In helping to mobilise greater investment in, and action on, the rule of law and access to justice, the Council can accelerate progress toward the peaceful, inclusive and just societies envisaged in Goal 16, and help to build a concrete pathway to the entire Sustainable Development Agenda.

IDLO stands ready to support the Human Rights Council to strengthen the rule of law in the service of human rights and sustainable development.

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.