

IDLO-TANZANIA CONFERENCE CALLS FOR AFRICA-WIDE COLLABORATION

(Rome, Italy) June 9, 2016 - Africa-wide collaboration on strengthening the rule of law will play a key role in realising international development goals.

This was the consensus at the end of a two-day rule of law and development meeting convened by the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) and the Government of Tanzania last week.

The conference attracted over 100 delegates from 18 countries and included ministers, judges, legal experts and representatives from the international community, civil society and business. The round table format enabled frank discussions and the sharing of experiences around the themes of institution building; constitutionalism and legal reform; access to justice; and investing in the rule of law for economic development.

The meeting ended with a call for action on:

- Improving the capacity of the judicial system and the knowledge of jurisprudence for Africa, including mainstreaming gender into judicial practice and setting up specialist commercial and corruption courts;
- Improving access to justice on the continent by establishing a network to share experiences on legal aid and a corresponding set of indicators by which Africans can measure progress on Aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063 and Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda;
- Building the capacity of African institutions to tackle investment issues and barriers to development, including corruption starting with a multi-stakeholder discussion between government, business and civil society actors; and
- Recognizing the need to engage with customary systems of justice, which are the main means of accessing justice in Africa and treating them as dynamic systems that match changes in society.

Irene Khan, Director-General of IDLO told delegates that is now global consensus that the rule of law and access to justice are an indivisible part of sustainable development. “They are no longer optional extras but a premise without which development cannot be sustained. The rule of law provides the framework for transparent, responsive and accountable institutions which strengthen people's trust and confidence, and by doing so, promote peaceful societies as well as development.”

And she stressed the importance of continuing discussions on strengthening rule of law on the continent to ensure that the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda can be realized.

Tanzania's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Augustine Mahiga said that the importance of the rule of law cannot be overemphasized: “Most conflicts in Africa are precipitated by a lack of or break of the rule of law. The rule of law is the cornerstone of stability, peace and security, law and order, the protection of civilians and the protection of property. Of the three realms of power, rule of law is

probably the most sacrosanct. It is not subject to the whims of politics or the temporary nature of the executive.

“When you talk of the rule of law, you are talking about dispensing justice to the marginalized, to the deprived and to the voiceless. But you are also talking of defending that institution called ‘justice’. It may sound abstract, but it’s very real.

“The biggest problem of defending justice is the challenge of corruption. With corruption you will never get justice and you will undermine stability and development.”

IDLO will take forward discussions as part of its wider initiative for the Africa.

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