



INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION
STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL, MS JAN BEAGLE
PRE-COP 26 ALL4CLIMATE SIDE EVENT
A Rule of Law Approach to Accelerating Climate Action

9 September 2021

Distinguished guests, colleagues and friends.

Thank you for joining us today for this timely and important discussion.

I would like to thank our co-sponsors, the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS) and the Ministry for Ecological Transition of the Government of Italy, for hosting a timely conference in the lead up to COP 26, and for providing the platform for our event here today.

From droughts and forest fires to rising sea levels and flash floods, the devastating effects of a rapidly warming world are indisputable and all around us.

Perhaps most alarming is that these “once in a century” disasters may just be a harbinger of worse things to come.

We risk rapid warming to 1.5C by 2040¹, and even earlier, on current emissions levels. If we do not act now, extreme weather events will only become more frequent and more devastating.

Yet a yawning gap remains between what the best available science tell us we need, and what States have committed to in their nationally determined contribution.

Secretary General Guterres has described this as a “code red for humanity.”

Our choices and actions at this critical juncture will decide whether we continue hurtling towards a climate catastrophe –

Or whether we can mitigate the worst effects of climate change and tackle its root causes to protect our planet for future generations.

The need for a more ambitious and transformative approach to climate action is clear and urgent.

In our Strategic Plan, IDLO champions of the concept of “climate justice,” to enable transformative climate action grounded in rule of law principles.

Climate justice seeks to reduce and redress the socio-economic inequalities that both contribute to, and are exacerbated by, climate change.

It is based on the understanding that the causes and effects of climate change, as well as the actions needed to address them, are closely linked to issues of justice.

¹ IPCC report summary for policymakers, B.1.3, page 18,
https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM.pdf

Climate change disproportionately affects people living in conditions of vulnerability and marginalization, who have contributed least to the problem.

Competition over increasingly scarce land and natural resources undermines peace and security and drives conflict and displacement in fragile contexts.

Indigenous peoples and local communities, often guardians of the planet's biodiversity, are further at risk of being deprived of their environmental rights and the protection of their lands.

Discriminatory laws and practices mean that women and girls are less able to protect themselves even as they face higher rates of violence during climate-related crises and instability.

And youth and future generations must deal with the consequences of present day decisions, while being excluded from decision-making processes.

A people-centred rule of law approach requires empowering individuals and communities to claim their rights and participate in decision-making processes. This can have broad positive effects on climate action.

For instance, countries where women are excluded from decision-making have increased levels of environmental degradation, while having more women in government correlates positively with reduced carbon emissions².

A rule of law approach also emphasises the need for robust laws and institutions, particularly within the justice sector, that can enable swift action to protect the rights of those most severely affected by climate change.

Globally, there are over a thousand³ specialised environmental courts that can harness the latest legal and scientific expertise, provide speedy access to justice, and deliver effective remedies, including increasingly for the rights of future generations.

The task ahead is daunting but not insurmountable. We cannot afford not to act, and we must act together.

A renewed commitment to cooperation and solidarity, grounded in principles of multilateralism, is needed to tackle challenges like climate change, that are too big and too complex for any of us to solve alone.

I am pleased to welcome our distinguished speakers who will share their insights and help build momentum for a rule of law approach to climate action in the lead up to COP 26 and beyond.

IDLO is committed to working with you to help achieve a greener, just and more climate resilient future.

² <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/gender-equality-and-climate-change-have-more-in-common-than-you-think/>

³ "Right to a healthy environment: Report of the Special Rapporteur", para 31
<https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/43/53>