

STATEMENT OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

Jan Beagle, Director-General, IDLO

Ministerial Meeting for the Launch of the Online Platform on Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from Covid-19

27 August 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic and climate change are the defining challenges of our time. While both are real and present dangers, climate change represents a far more massive existential threat to future generations than what the world has experienced so far with COVID-19.

But the pandemic and the climate crisis also share another important distinction: both require good governance, international solidarity and multilateral cooperation to avert further death, disease, and destruction. While governments around the world search for the right balance of measures to contain and resolve these problems, the law stands out as a powerful tool for addressing these emergencies at local, national, regional and global levels. Now, more than ever, strong legal capacity is needed to enable effective responses to these challenges.

As the only global intergovernmental organization dedicated exclusively to promoting the rule of law and access to justice, at IDLO we believe that good governance and the rule of law are central to managing the COVID-19 crisis while at the same time mitigating the causes of climate change and adapting to the impacts of changes that cannot be avoided. Despite the profound challenges it poses, this crisis also represents a unique opportunity to shift to greener, more resilient, more sustainable and inclusive societies, in the spirit of *Building Back Better*. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the global community in unprecedented ways, exposing structural inequalities and putting the spotlight on the ever more evident interlinkages among climate crisis, environmental degradation and global sustainability.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that climate change is not just about the environment – it is also a development problem that threatens the lives and livelihoods of millions of people, the stability of the economy worldwide, and the achievement of peaceful and inclusive societies. The challenges posed are cross-cutting and impact all areas of human life.

As Secretary-General Guterres stressed on the occasion of International Mother Earth Day 2020: *“The impact of the coronavirus is both immediate and dreadful. But there is another, deep emergency -- the planet’s unfolding environmental crisis. Climate disruption is approaching a point of no return. We must act decisively to protect our planet from both the coronavirus and the existential threat of climate disruption”*.

Rule of law principles are as essential to guide the COVID-19 recovery effort as they are to sustain climate action. Enabling and fair laws and policies; equitable access to justice; effective, accessible, and accountable institutions; empowerment, equality and inclusion, must be part of the pandemic’s recovery process, in alignment with the integrated needs for climate action and the 2030 Agenda. Rule of law responses, guided by global calls for climate justice, offer principled approaches and innovative legal strategies to support climate mitigation and adaptation.

Addressing climate change, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, requires transformative political, economic and social changes to ensure that no one is left behind. The most vulnerable and marginalized people living in lower-income countries and fragile states – especially

women, youth and indigenous people - bear the brunt of public health emergencies and disasters such as COVID-19 and climate change, due to a combination of geographical exposure, systemic discrimination, unequal economic systems and extensive reliance on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and pastoralism.

IDLO is committed to playing a role in supporting countries to leave no-one behind by addressing these problems, including measures to contain and halt the spread of the coronavirus that respect and fulfill human rights, and climate resilient and low-carbon transformation processes at all levels.

As the international community comes together to combat this pandemic, IDLO welcomes the launch of the Online Platform on Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from COVID-19 and applauds the Government of Japan and the UNFCCC for this innovative solution.

Protecting people against COVID-19 and against climate change are **twin acts of justice**. The concepts of climate justice and intergenerational justice that underlie action to combat climate change are closely intertwined with the objectives of social inclusion and social justice that must be at the center of the recovery effort. This approach guides IDLO in the pursuit of its mission "to create a culture of justice" and build the resilience of communities against future crises.

IDLO works to raise awareness about the unique role of the law in advancing the right to health and in creating the conditions for people to live safe and healthy lives. We support governments, parliamentarians and civil society to reform their laws as needed in order to protect their peoples from the pandemics of today and tomorrow and the existential challenge of climate change. The rule of law remains one of the best investments countries can make to save lives, protect the most vulnerable and rebuild stronger, more resilient societies.

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.