

**Statement on behalf of Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Germany,  
Kosovo, Liberia, Luxembourg, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Portugal, Sao  
Tome e Principe, Solomon Islands, Sweden, United States**

**who are the members of the Justice Action Coalition**

**United Nations  
High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

**New York City  
17 July 2023**

## – CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –

**Thank you, Mr./Mme President,**

I have the honour to speak on behalf of Canada, Colombia, France, Germany, Kosovo, Liberia, Luxembourg, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Portugal, Sao Tome e Principe, Solomon Islands, Sweden, United States and my own country Costa Rica. We represent the [Justice Action Coalition](#): a multistakeholder cross-regional coalition championing equal access to justice for all as part of SDG16. In this regard, we also support the [joint statement delivered on behalf the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies](#).

We are at the mid-point of the 2030 Agenda and close to the SDG Summit. It is therefore important that we highlight three points:

1. Equal access to justice for all is a critical enabler for sustainable development;
2. In order to achieve this, we need a shift towards putting people at the center of justice systems; and
3. Effective allocation of resources for justice reform is needed to pivot from rhetoric to action.

Mr/Mme Chair,

To our first point: *equal access to justice for all is a critical enabler for sustainable development*. We strongly believe that we cannot address poverty, inequality and conflict without ensuring equal access to justice for all. We are in the midst of intersecting crises – rising costs of living, food insecurity, climate change, plummeting trust in institutions at national and global levels. And we are hearing calls for justice at all levels.

The [Justice For All](#) report shows that globally 5.1 billion people lack meaningful access to justice. Those most at risk of being left behind, including women, children, minorities and refugees find it more difficult to access justice.

In response, the ministers of the Justice Action Coalition launched the [2023 Justice Appeal](#), calling on all justice actors – state and non-state – to come to the SDG Summit this September with data and evidence to demonstrate their strong [commitment and contributions](#) to close the global justice gap.

*Secondly, in order to truly achieve equal access to justice for all, we need a shift towards putting people at the center of justice systems.*

This requires a justice system designed to address what people really need when they seek justice. It seeks to empower people, increase their meaningful participation in justice, and provide justice services that help them achieve fair outcomes. Over 60 countries have endorsed the principles of people-centered justice articulated in the [Hague Declaration on Equal Access to Justice by 2030](#).

We urge the UN and all its Member States to take this approach forward in the implementation of the SDGs, in order to leave no one behind. Furthermore, we encourage the follow-up to Our Common Agenda, for example in the implementation of the renewed vision of the UN Secretary-General on the Rule of Law.

*Third, effective allocation of resources for justice is a must for pivoting from rhetoric to action.*

The justice gap is costing the global community : it is estimated that unmet legal challenges for individuals can cost up to 5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). If we want to reduce this burden on individuals and society as a whole, we must learn from other sectors such as health care and education. We can achieve impact at scale by prioritising the financing of justice delivery reforms which are designed in partnership with impacted communities. Inspiring examples of such services include expanded access to legal assistance and counsel, paralegals, community-mediation services, holistic social and legal service centers, and guided legal information technology platforms. These tailored, frontline solutions can help people resolve legal problems and, in many cases prevent legal problems from worsening. Moreover, community-level and community intensive solutions will increase access to legal representation and reduce costs for individuals and justice systems. To help guide policy makers on funding priorities for meaningful justice interventions it is crucial to adequately fund justice research, data collection and innovation.

In closing, Mr./Mme. President,

We strongly believe that people-centered justice plays a pivotal role in achieving the SDGs, by ensuring more peaceful, just and inclusive societies. We therefore call on all states to redouble their efforts and work closely with non-state actors and the United Nations, to make equal access to justice for all a reality.