



INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

Input to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2025

3 March 2025

1. The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) is pleased to provide its input to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2025.
2. As the only global intergovernmental organization working to promote the rule of law to advance peace and sustainable development, IDLO strongly believes that rule of law, featured most prominently in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, but incorporated throughout the 2030 Agenda, is a powerful tool that can promote peace and prosperity, unlock development potential, and protect human rights for all. It can address the root causes of global crises and equip people and governments to develop fair and collaborative approaches to navigate a rapidly changing world.
3. Consistent with the UN approach, IDLO understands the rule of law as a principle of governance in which all persons and entities, including the state itself, are accountable to the law. The rule of law encompasses both procedural fairness and just outcomes. It requires clear, prospective laws that are available publicly and adjudicated through due process by an independent judiciary. It also incorporates the substantive element of justice, which emphasizes equality, fairness, and non-discrimination, and includes a commitment to democratic principles and good governance. The rule of law protects human rights and provides a framework for their realization through constitutional and legal protections, institutions for effective implementation and accountability, judicial and administrative remedies, and the legal empowerment of people to access justice and claim their rights.
4. The following sections illustrate how progress on the rule of law and SDG 16 is linked to progress on SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17, and tackling global challenges.

(a) Impacts of the multiple and interconnected crises on the implementation of SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17

5. Challenges to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda are mounting on all fronts. As of 2024, only 17 percent of the targets for SDGs are on track to be achieved by 2030, while over a third have either stalled or regressed.¹ This is closely correlated to a sustained decline in the rule of law, which has come under pressure across the world.²
6. The post-pandemic economic recovery has been slow and uneven, with countries beset with inflation, fiscal constraints and debt, contributing to inequalities both within and among countries, with a disproportionate impact on women and minorities.

¹ United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024* (2024), p. 4.

² World Justice Project, 'WJP Rule of Law Index 2024 Global Press Release' (2024), available at: [WJP Rule of Law Index 2024 Global Press Release | World Justice Project](#).

7. Violent conflicts have proliferated and intensified and are at their highest levels since World War II. In addition to a large cost in death and human suffering, conflicts and fragility pose one of the largest impediments to sustainable development. An estimated three-fourths of the world's extremely poor live in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, with this number likely to rise to 86 percent by 2030.³
8. Natural disasters, extreme weather events and environmental degradation have contributed to food insecurity, health threats and competition over natural resources, further exacerbating the risk of conflict. Disruptions to agricultural yields caused by extreme weather events have led to slow economic growth,⁴ fueled socio-economic inequalities and are widening the SDG financing and investment gaps.
9. Women and girls continue to face legal and structural barriers that prevent them from accessing justice, leaving them vulnerable to discrimination, violence, and exploitation. Closing this justice gap is essential to ensuring that half of the global population can access their rights and effectively contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Accelerating progress on SDG 5 can also yield significant economic gains, with some estimates suggesting that closing the gap could add over USD 7 trillion to the global economy.⁵
10. Currently, 8.5 per cent of the global population lives in extreme poverty, with 67 per cent of them living in sub-Saharan Africa. Progress in poverty reduction has stalled amid low growth, setbacks due to COVID-19 and violent conflicts. Poverty rates in low-income countries are higher than before the pandemic. Around 3.5 billion people (44 per cent of the global population) live in poverty⁶, and this number has barely changed since the 1990s due to population growth. There is concern that, without accelerated effort, the SDGs are beyond reach.⁷
11. None of the targets for SDG 8 are on track, with progress on more than half either stagnant or regressing.⁸ Meanwhile, official development assistance to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) is declining, and global growth is expected to be low, reaching only 3.1 per cent in five years, a mediocre performance compared with the pre-pandemic average and well below the 7 per cent target set in SDG 8.1 for LDCs.⁹ At the same time, this combination of slow economic growth, energy price fluctuations, and policy-driven geo-economic fragmentation has hindered Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows,¹⁰ further deteriorating the hopes of mobilizing the resources required to achieve the SDGs.

³ OECD, *States of Fragility 2022* (2022), p. 6, available at: [States of Fragility 2022 | OECD](#).

⁴ International Monetary Fund (IMF), *World Economic Outlook: Policy Pivot, Rising Threats* (2024), available at: [World Economic Outlook, October 2024: Policy Pivot, Rising Threats](#).

⁵ Moody's Analytics, 'Close the Gender Gap to Unlock Productivity Gains' (2023), available at: [close-the-gender-gap-to-unlock-productivity-gains.pdf](#).

⁶ World Bank Group, *Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report: Pathways out of the Polycrisis* (2024), p. xxiii, available at: [Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report 2024](#).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Sustainable Development Solutions Network, *Sustainable Development Report 2024: The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future* (2024), available at: [sustainable-development-report-2024.pdf](#)

⁹ See above, International Monetary Fund (2024).

¹⁰ OECD, 'New OECD FDI data: trends, impacts and regulations' (2024), available at: [New OECD FDI data: trends, impacts and regulations | OECD](#).

(b) Three key areas where sustainable, inclusive, science and evidence-based solutions for achieving the SDGs and leaving no one behind are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2025, also bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.

12. The following solutions, drawn from IDLO's programming and research, showcase how strengthening the rule of law and SDG 16, as enablers and accelerators of the 2030 Agenda, can address the root causes of the aforementioned crises and catalyse progress across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

i) *Strengthening legal frameworks and policies can prevent non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and help better respond to public health emergencies (PHEs) [SDG 3, interlinked with SDGs 2 and 16]*

13. At global, national, and local levels, the law is a powerful tool for promoting the right to health. Evidence-based regulatory and policy measures have proven effective in reversing the rising burden of NCDs. Legal preparedness is also a key competency for strengthening national capacity to prevent and respond to PHEs and other public health risks.

14. IDLO has supported national efforts to prevent NCDs across Africa and Asia (**Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Tanzania, Uganda, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and Thailand**). The Global Regulatory and Fiscal Capacity Building Programme (Global RECAP) aims to strengthen regulatory and fiscal capacity to support the development, adoption, implementation and monitoring of cost-effective regulatory and policy interventions to promote healthy diets and physical activity. This promotes a science and evidence-based approach that strengthens legal and regulatory frameworks to prevent NCDs, combining capacity building, social mobilization and research. The programme also provides technical and financial assistance to local civil society organizations (CSOs) to encourage meaningful participation in health-related decision making.

15. In **Uganda** and **Zambia**, IDLO, through the Pandemic Preparedness and Response Project (PRPP), promoted multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination and strengthened legal capacities to better prevent, address and respond to PHEs. This has, *inter alia*, led to the operationalization of the Zambia National Public Health Institute, enhancing local capacity to respond to PHEs in alignment with International Health Regulations (IHR) and international standards. In Uganda, the PRPP supported collaboration among stakeholders in health, justice and legislative mechanisms in aligning the Animal Diseases Act and the Biosafety and Biosecurity Bill with the Public Health Act in compliance with the IHR. This assists in strengthening Uganda's "One Health" approach.

ii) *Eliminating discriminatory legislation will support women and girls to access their rights [SDGs 5 and 8, interlinked with SDG 16]*

16. Eliminating discriminatory laws to bridge justice gaps is not only a matter of fairness but also a strategic investment in sustainable development, as growing evidence shows a strong correlation between legal reforms and improved outcomes for women and girls across various aspects of their lives. IDLO works alongside civil society, the judiciary and policymakers at the state level to eliminate discriminatory laws and develop legal and institutional frameworks that promote access to justice for all. This work contributes to enhancing women and girls' access to justice and promoting their legal empowerment, including their ability to claim their economic rights.

17. In **Kenya, Mali, the Philippines and Sierra Leone**, IDLO partnered with state and local non-state actors in mapping national legislation with discriminatory provisions, devising a roadmap for legal reform, entailing repeal or amendment. This also involved strengthening the capacities of law reform commissions, ministries, judiciaries, parliaments and civil society actors to advance those reforms.
18. In **Kenya**, IDLO provided technical assistance in developing the Children's Bill, Matrimonial Property Rules, and amendments to the Law of Succession Act, as well as the Judiciary Sexual Harassment Policy. Additionally, IDLO supported the development and adoption of the first county-level policy on violence against women and girls.
19. In **Tunisia**, IDLO supported a legislative reform agenda on violence against women and girls. This included the adoption of a policy framework for women's shelters, as well as building the legal drafting capacity of state and non-state actors, including the Ministry of Women.

iii) *Promote enabling environments for sustainable economic growth [SDGs 8 and 17]*

20. Clear and effective economic and commercial legal frameworks promote trade, investment, and economic growth. They provide stability and certainty, check coercive and predatory behaviour, and enhance competition. Improving inclusive economic growth entails developing laws and policies that drive inclusive economic growth, increasing national capacities to implement commercial and economic laws, manage trade and investment, and resolve commercial disputes through courts and tribunals, as well as through alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms.
21. In **Kenya**, IDLO has been supporting the Government in rolling out Court Annexed Mediation (CAM) in priority courts, notably the Commercial and Tax Division of the High Court. Through CAM, cases brought before the courts are referred to mediation for possible settlement where appropriate, resulting in a dramatic reduction in the average time to resolve a commercial dispute – from 465 to just 66 days. CAM has now been operationalized in 94 courts across the country,¹¹ and 96% of cases were concluded with a full (84%) or partial (12%) agreement among the parties.¹² CAM adopts a comprehensive approach to inclusive economic development, recognizing that it extends beyond traditional macroeconomic activities to encompass small-scale trade and investments. CAM has resulted in savings of some 2.7 billion Kenyan shillings, making resources available for reinvestment back into the economy.¹³
22. In multiple LDCs (**Ethiopia, The Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia and Uganda**), IDLO has been strengthening state capacity to negotiate investment agreements, direct investments toward sustainable development and solve

¹¹ Judiciary of Kenya, *State of the Judiciary and the Administration of Justice - Annual Report Financial Year 2021/22* (2022), p. 98, available at: <https://www.judiciary.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Sojar-21-22-for-Launch-1.pdf>.

¹² Ibid., p. 100; Judiciary of Kenya, *State of the Judiciary and Administration of Justice - Annual Report Financial Year 2022/23* (2023), available at: <https://judiciary.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/SOJAR-2022-2023-1.pdf>

¹³ See above, Judiciary of Kenya (2022), p. 262.

investment disputes through the provision of commercial legal advice.¹⁴ In The Gambia, for example, IDLO assisted the Government in an international arbitration case initiated by a foreign investor concerning two offshore petroleum licenses. As a result, the investor agreed to relinquish all claims on one license and renegotiate terms on the other, avoiding potential government liability of US\$200–300 million. In Senegal, IDLO's capacity development efforts have enhanced the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy's oversight of mining investments. These activities have improved the authorities' understanding of the benefits and complexities of FDI and better positioned Senegal to effectively manage and negotiate investment treaties in support of its national development strategy, as well as channel investments towards sustainable development. These efforts are consistent with the targets set through SDG 17.3 and 17.5 to mobilize additional resources for developing countries from multiple sources and to support developing countries to adopt and implement investment promotion regimes.

(c) Three examples of measures to accelerate progress towards SDGs through well-coordinated actions in key transitions to bring progress to scale, building on interlinkages between SDGs to ensure cohesive progress

23. IDLO proposes the following complementary and mutually reinforcing measures to urgently accelerate progress across the 2030 Agenda and maximize results.

i) Strengthen Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes to create an enabling environment for sustainable economic growth

24. ADR has become a near-universal means of expanding access to justice for all, as evidenced by the 174 countries and territories that have formally recognized it as means of resolving contractual disputes.¹⁵ The benefits of adopting commercial ADR for economic development are especially evident in the relationship between women's entrepreneurship and access to markets as a solution to economic disparities. Policies and programmes that establish and entrench commercial ADR practices can act as an effective means to empower parties to resolve business disputes and decongest formal and costly justice systems. The speed and efficacy in which disputes are resolved also enables parties to focus resources on commercial activities. Mediation offers key benefits, especially in resolving disputes expeditiously and amicably, preventing a fracturing of relationships between the state and investors. While sustained economic growth requires complex integrated policy actions beyond the justice sector, ADR can serve as a targeted enabler of sustainable economic growth. Indeed, ADR increases the confidence of both national and international stakeholders in their ability to protect their business and investments, thus stimulating both domestic and foreign financing. To maximize the impact of these increased investments, it is essential to combine the promotion of ADR with the adoption of international investment frameworks, which can balance investment protection with the priorities of sustainable development.

¹⁴ See International Development Law Organization (IDLO), *A Rule of Law Approach to Inclusive Economic Development: Supporting Fair and Equitable International Investment Agreements in Least Developed Countries* (2023), available at: [A Rule of Law approach to Inclusive Economic Development: Supporting Fair and Equitable International Investment Agreements in Least Developed Countries | IDLO - International Development Law Organization](#); IDLO, *Investment Support Programme for Least Developed Countries: A Public Private Partnership for Sustainable Development* (2022), available at: [Investment Support Programme for Least Developed Countries a Public Private Partnership for Sustainable Development | IDLO - International Development Law Organization](#).

¹⁵ World Bank Group, *Doing Business 2020* (2020), available at: [Doing Business 2020](#).

ii) *Enhance participatory governance to ensure healthy lives and well-being*

25. Participatory decision-making processes are essential for ensuring that laws, policies, strategies and programmes respond to the needs of all communities and generate trust. This requires multi-stakeholder engagement, alongside strengthening capacities to meaningfully engage in decision-making processes. This approach is particularly crucial in building an environment for evidence-informed public policies and government interventions to address NCDs and other health concerns. Similarly, global health and development actors that support countries in enhancing their PHE preparedness should ensure consultation with stakeholders in PHE legal assessments and decision-making processes.

iii) *Adopt a rule-of-law approach to women's role in the development and implementation of laws and policies on the environment and natural resources*

26. This includes: (a) empowering women to claim their environmental rights; (b) supporting the development of legal and regulatory frameworks and institutional capacity to address the environmental challenges faced by women; (c) strengthening women's access to land and other natural resources through a combination of legal empowerment and institution-building initiatives; and (d) strengthening food security for women and girls.

(d) Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken to support implementation of the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration and the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future, to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

27. IDLO has undertaken the following concrete actions that operationalize commitments in the Political Declaration and the Pact for the Future.

i) *Eradicating poverty and ending food insecurity*

(Political Declaration, para. 38(a) and (b); Pact for the Future, Actions 2 and 3)

28. Rural poverty and food insecurity are often linked with landlessness or insecure and contested land rights. IDLO implements rule of law solutions to promote equal access to economic resources as well as ownership and control over land and access to finance.

29. In **Rwanda**, IDLO is strengthening the capacity of formal (National Land Authority) and informal (Abunzi) justice actors to resolve land disputes, improving access to justice for over 3,500 smallholders, who are now able to navigate the justice system and secure their land rights. This increased land tenure is leading to positive investments on the side of smallholders, who are using their land titles to access credit, improve their business and, thus, benefit their communities through employment opportunities that reduce both poverty and food insecurity. As a result, the project is directly contributing to SDG target 2.3 and indirectly to SDG target 1.4.

ii) *Enhancing access to justice and equality between men and women*

(Political Declaration, para. 38(c); Pact for the Future, Actions 7 and 8)

30. IDLO works to reduce the justice gap for women and girls, including by: (a) promoting the elimination of discriminatory laws and practices; (b) supporting institutions to address the justice needs of women and girls; (c) protecting rights in digital spaces; and (d) empowering women and girls to claim their rights.

31. In **Tunisia**, IDLO is strengthening access to justice and services for survivors of violence against women and girls by: (i) supporting the Government to implement the special law on the elimination of violence against women (Act No. 58/2017); (ii) increasing the provision of legal aid services to survivors of violence, including access to services provided online or remotely; and (iii) providing training and other support to the judiciary to effectively handle the cases of violence against women and girls.

32. In **Uganda**, IDLO is providing technical support on managing cases related to violence against women to the judiciary, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Uganda Police Force and Uganda Prison Service. IDLO also supports civil society partners in conducting research on specific forms of violence against women, providing legal aid services to survivors, and strengthening referrals and accountability mechanisms.

33. In **Ukraine**, IDLO is implementing an accountability project for international crimes which institutionalizes a survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach to investigating and prosecuting conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). Activities include: (i) enhancing knowledge and practical skills on international humanitarian law and international criminal law among key personnel within the Office of the Prosecutor General and the National Prosecution Unit; (ii)

increasing knowledge and skills to effectively prosecute CRSV; (iii) improving integrated mechanisms of cooperation between prosecution teams and CSOs; and (iv) providing dedicated support to the prosecution with handling large data sets. As part of this project, IDLO has supported the Office of the Prosecutor General in establishing the Victims and Witnesses Support Coordination Center, initially launched in Kyiv and soon to expand to the regions. Additionally, IDLO is assisting in the development of Citizen Reception Halls that will provide victims with support services in a safe environment.

iii) *Strengthening public integrity and enhancing anti-corruption efforts*

(Political Declaration, para. 38(t)(vi); Pact for the Future, Actions 4(h) and 7)

34. IDLO has implemented several rule of law initiatives that provide the necessary tools and capacity at the national level to strengthen public integrity and enhance anti-corruption efforts.¹⁶ Those initiatives strengthen legal and policy frameworks to promote transparency, integrity, and accountability, but also support institutions to prevent, detect, investigate, and prosecute corruption.
35. In **Armenia**, IDLO supported the establishment of a department within the Office of the Prosecutor General dealing with forfeiture of property of illegal origin, pursuant to newly enacted legislation on Confiscation of Property of Illicit Origin. This included technical support on the selection of prosecutors and department leadership through an open, merit-based recruitment process. IDLO also extended institutional capacity building support by developing Standard Operating Procedures, aiding in Mutual Legal Assistance requests and facilitating cooperation with the Camden Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network (CARIN). The cumulative value of assets slated for confiscation amounts to several million dollars.
36. In the **Bahamas**, IDLO delivered training to police and prosecutors on case management and financial crimes, equipping them with the skills to effectively handle complex investigations. Additional training was provided to the Office of the Public Defender, the Department of Public Prosecution, and police investigators on forensic evidence, enhancing their ability to prosecute financial crimes and ensuring greater accountability in criminal justice processes.

¹⁶ IDLO, *Making Laws and Institutions Work for People: IDLO's Work in Enhancing Anti-Corruption and Transparency* (2023), available at: [Making Laws and Institutions Work for People: IDLO's Work in Enhancing Anti-corruption and Transparency | IDLO - International Development Law Organization](#).

(e) Recommendations and key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2025 HLPF

37. Investing in the rule of law can be a powerful driver of peace and sustainable development, as acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda and the Pact for the Future. It provides the framework for building just, inclusive, and resilient societies where rights are protected, institutions are accountable, and all people have equal access to justice. Placing people at the centre of justice, creates systems that are accessible, fair, and capable of delivering meaningful outcomes for everyone.
38. Closing the justice gap between men and women is critical in enabling women and girls to realize their rights, bolstering economic growth and accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda. This requires eliminating discriminatory laws, protecting women and girls' rights in digital spaces, strengthening the capacity of institutions to address the needs of women and girls, and empowering women and girls to understand and claim their rights.
39. Creating enabling environments for economic growth requires strengthening institutional capacity to manage trade, investment and commercial disputes, including through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes. Harnessing digital innovation to expand access to markets, financial services and legal resources for all is also crucial. Addressing economic disparities through targeted programmes and channelling Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) towards sustainable development should be prioritized.
40. Promoting people-centred approaches to health and well-being involves ensuring participatory decision-making processes that make public health laws, policies and programmes responsive to the needs of all communities. Empowering people and communities to understand and exercise their health rights is also key to advancing equality in health.
41. Enhancing openness and transparency and combatting corruption at national and international levels, including by building on existing instruments such as the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, is critical to ensure that public resources are effectively spent, including in the context additional financing for sustainable development.
42. Encouraging “whole-of-society” and “whole-of-government” partnerships is essential for tackling transnational challenges that transcend borders and sectors. By fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, these partnerships can drive coordinated efforts to accelerate progress across the 2030 Agenda.