

23 November 2016

**71<sup>st</sup> session of the General Assembly**

**Statement by H.E. Peter Thomson,  
International Development Law Organization (IDLO) Meeting**

Dear Director General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be with all of you today. I wish to thank you for the invitation to visit IDLO and to have this conversation on the important work you undertake around the world.

I came to Europe, on my way from Marrakech with two main messages that I would like to share with you this afternoon. After that I hope to have the opportunity to learn more of your different projects and experiences. As I understand it, you are the only intergovernmental organization with a dual mandate to promote the rule of law and development,

The first of my messages is the importance of decisive action on the implementation of Agenda 2030. As you may know, I have adopted as the priority of my presidency a renewed commitment to the universal push to transform our world through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

In the SDGs, we have a bold, revolutionary framework set by us all to improve the life of people on this planet and to reverse the path of unsustainability, which humanity has been travelling on.

If our grand children's world is not to be placed in jeopardy, we must meet the historic responsibility of the SDGs with all our efforts.

The second message is that education is key to the success or failure of Agenda 2030. Dag Hammarskjöld once remarked that "everything will be fine at the end when people, just people, stop thinking of the United Nations as a Picasso abstraction and see it as a drawing they made themselves". The same could be said of the SDGs : we won't be successful until everyone in the world, particularly the youth, see these goals as both their rights and responsibilities, as the Agenda of every individual on planet earth.

IDLO's mandate, and the work you undertake each day related to Goal 16, are particularly important for the attainment of rule of law, access to justice and building effective, transparent and accountable institutions.

Agenda 2030 has firmly set rule of law at the center of development. We had long known that rule of law in sustainable development is not an option but is at the very core of sustainable development.

We all know that Goal 16 focuses on the legal dimension of development, but we could say the same of all the other goals, whether they focus on the oceans, health, education, or the environment. . Rule of law and access to justice are like golden threads running through the rich tapestry of our Agenda.

Implementation of the SDGs involves all of us, international organizations, civil society, the non-governmental community and the private sector and the Agenda is not only inclusive; it is the universal and integrated making it, in fact a master plan for all of humanity to follow.

I am looking forward to hearing from you, experts in the field who work daily all over the world providing assistance, capacity building and services to the people who demand access to justice and the strengthening of their institutions.

Your organization, with your in-depth experience, your dedicated leadership, your committed members, your experts, and allies around the world, is showing us how partnerships can be successful and change lives by making SDG16 a reality.

When governments, international organizations, civil society, and partners get together, there will be no challenges we cannot meet. We will more effectively combat gender-based violence and together we can promote and consolidate good governance and improve the fight against corruption and organized crime.

We will draft better legislation for protecting our oceans and seas, increase the capacity of our judicial institutions to protect human rights and ensure our communities become part of participatory decision-making processes.

IDLO has demonstrated that the promotion of rule of law and access to justice requires permanent and committed action. Such action must extend all the way from supporting multilateral and regional processes and negotiations, down to assisting in the creation of transparent land governance system in the smallest of communities.

Equity, empathy, and the fundamentals of human rights call on us all to build stronger partnerships in order that we can deliver the promises of SDG16 in a manner by which none is left behind.

I thank you.