



Finland to the UN Security Council in 2013–2014

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Agenda Item 83: The rule of law at the national and international levels

Statement on behalf of the Nordic countries by

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country Finland.

The General Assembly held on 24 September 2012 its first high-level meeting on the rule of law. The meeting was a milestone: it reaffirmed the cross-cutting nature of the rule of law and its critical importance for all the main areas of the United Nations: peace and security, human rights and development.

The high-level meeting endorsed a forward-looking declaration that underlined the interlinking and mutually reinforcing nature of the rule of law, human rights and democracy. It emphasized that the right to equal access to justice belongs to all, including the vulnerable groups. This declaration will guide our future work in transforming our comprehensive agenda into action in cooperation with all stakeholders. It is encouraging that a number of Member States responded to the Secretary-General's call and made voluntary pledges based on their national priorities and needs.

Denmark and Finland gave several pledges to enhance women's access to justice and especially, to tackle violence against women. Finland also had the honour to host together with South Africa and UN Women a High-Level Event on Women's Access to Justice. Very high level attendance and all the pledges made demonstrated that there is broad support and commitment to combat gender-based discrimination and empower women and girls through strengthening the rule of law.

Mr. Chairman,

The Secretary-General has provided us with a very useful report A/67/290 highlighting the progress made and the future steps to be taken to develop a more comprehensive UN approach.

The development of international norms and standards has been encouraging. For example the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in December last year completing the framework for the full protection of children's rights.

At the international level several Member States have brought their disputes to international adjudicative mechanisms with the purpose of solving them peacefully. The International Court of Justice plays a central role in this regard. We celebrate this year the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea is proceeding in peaceful settlement of maritime disputes.

Fight against impunity has made significant progress. The Nordic countries are committed to promoting the universal ratification and effective implementation of the Rome Statute. The International Criminal Court rendered its first verdict this year, and the Court is advancing in investigating several situations. We call for full cooperation with the ICC. There must be and there is accountability for the most serious international crimes. We fully support the efforts

in establishing appropriate reparations for the victims and all the work of the Trust Fund for Victims.

The Secretary-General also reports of encouraging progress with non-judicial dispute resolution and accountability mechanisms. The International Commission of Inquiry on Libya presented its findings to the Human Rights Council in March. In the case of Syria, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry released its latest report to the Human Rights Council by stating that gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian law had taken place. Reports on sexual violence are particularly worrying. We call for the implementation of recommendations of such non-judicial bodies to maximize their utility.

Mr. Chairman,

National ownership is crucial for the rule of law assistance to be successful. The United Nations gives a valuable contribution by supporting Member States in legislative reforms, strengthening of justice and security institutions and enhancing citizen's participation. In post-conflict situations the UN provides important assistance in designing and implementing comprehensive transitional justice strategies.

We welcome the recent decisions of the Policy Committee aimed at further enhancing the coordination and coherence of UN's rule of law work. Empowering the field leadership is key for joint assessments and programming to be effective at the country level. We hope the Global Focal Point will allow the UN to answer to requests for assistance in a swift and appropriate manner. The Rule of Law Resource and Coordination Group led by the Deputy Secretary General and supported by the Rule of Law Unit will continue to play a crucial role in shaping the UN's strategic and comprehensive approach to the rule of law.

Mr. Chairman,

Strategic and comprehensive approach is needed to take forward the agenda set for us by our leaders in the High Level Meeting. We stand ready to work with you all.