
**STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT MISSION OF COSTA RICA TO THE UNITED
NATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE COMMUNITY OF LATIN AMERICAN AND
CARIBBEAN STATES**

THE RULE OF LAW AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

Mister Chairman:

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC.

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States welcomes the Secretary General annual report on strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities (A/68/ 181), which presents a useful overview of the achievements and challenges of the UN and its specialized agencies in strengthening the rule of law at the national and international levels. We take note of the report of the Secretary-General issued pursuant to paragraph 41 of the Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels (A/68/213/Add.1).

As the Secretary General notes, at the international level, the rule of law accords predictability and legitimacy to the actions of States, strengthens their sovereign equality and underpins the responsibility of a State to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction.

The discussion on this topic in the Sixth Committee is always a relevant opportunity to take stock of this important issue and to reflect upon the ways and means forward

Mister Chairman:

In the Declaration of Santiago of the First CELAC Summit (held in January 2013) we have reiterated that our Community is founded on the unrestricted respect for International Law, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the prohibition of use and threatened use of power, respect for self-determination of peoples under colonial domination and foreign occupation, for sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-intervention in the internal affairs of each country, protection and promotion of all human rights, the Rule of Law at national and international levels and democracy. Likewise, we are committed to work together for the sake of prosperity for all, in such a way as to eradicate discrimination, inequalities and marginalization, violations of human rights, and transgressions of the Rule of Law.

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States reaffirms its commitment to the rule of law and recognizes its importance for friendly and equitable relations and for building just and fair societies, as acknowledged in the High-Level Meeting Declaration.

As Members of the United Nations, and as stated in the high level Declaration, we are determined to establish a just and lasting peace all over the world, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We rededicate ourselves to support all efforts to uphold the sovereign equality of all States, to respect their territorial integrity and political independence, to refrain in our international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations, and to uphold the resolution of disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, the right to self-determination of peoples which remain under colonial domination and foreign occupation, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the equal rights of all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character and the fulfillment in good faith of the obligations assumed in accordance with the Charter.

CELAC recognizes that respect for the rule of law at the international level implies compliance with the existing international legal framework, in which the rule of law applies to all States equally and to international organisations, including the UN and its principal organs. In this regard, we reaffirm the obligation of all States to settle their international disputes by peaceful means, inter alia through negotiation, enquiry, good offices, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and judicial settlement, or other peaceful means of their own choice, and duly observing the relevant General Assembly Resolutions.

We are convinced that peace and security at the international level is fundamental for strengthening the rule of law, and stress the importance of continuing efforts to revitalize the General Assembly, to strengthen the Economic and Social Council, and to reform the Security Council, in order to turn it into a more effective, democratic, representative and transparent organ in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions. The full implementation of the obligations set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and in other international instruments, including the international human rights framework, is central to collective efforts to maintain international peace and security, effectively address emerging threats and ensure accountability for international crimes.

We take note of the important decisions on reform of the governance structures, quotas and voting rights of the Bretton Woods institutions, and we reiterate the importance of the reform of the governance of those institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions.

Mechanisms in our Latin American and Caribbean region play a significant role in fostering the rule of law within their Member States. Members of CELAC are committed to strengthening and promoting the rule of law in its member states and contribute to this end through dialogue, cooperation and by fostering solidarity among its members.

We recognize the importance of national ownership in rule of law activities. The rule of law implies the existence of a transparent legal system accessible to all, solid democratic institutions and laws, independent and impartial judicial systems and adequate redress mechanisms for human rights violations, as a framework for political and social development.

CELAC recognizes the necessary link between the rule of law at the international and at the national levels. These are not two parallel and separate concepts. On the contrary, both levels inform each other and are interlinked.

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean strongly urges States to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries.

We believe that strengthening the rule of law is not an exclusive problem of certain countries or regions but a global aspiration to be governed by agreed values, principles and norms, created through open predictable and recognized processes that take into account national perspectives.

We welcome UN programs and activities aim at strengthening the rule of law. We reiterate the importance that such UN assistance be broad in scope, in order to also include challenges regarding economic growth, sustainable development, and eradication of poverty.

In this context, CELAC recalls that the rule of law and development are strongly interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and that the advancement of the rule of law at the national and international levels is essential for sustained and inclusive economic growth, sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and hunger and the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, all of which in turn reinforce the rule of law. In this regard, we acknowledge the inclusion of access to justice for all, an element of Rule of Law, among the targets in the Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, which must be the basis for integrating SDGs in the new development agenda and should *not be re-opened*

Mister Chairman:

The sub-topic for this session's consideration of the Rule of Law at the national and international levels is *Sharing States' national practices in strengthening the rule of law through access to justice*..

As we did in the High Level Declaration on this topic, we reaffirm the principle of good governance and commit to an effective, just, non-discriminatory and equitable delivery of public services pertaining to the rule of law, including criminal, civil and administrative justice, commercial dispute settlement and legal aid. We are convinced that the independence of the judicial system, together with its impartiality and integrity, is an essential prerequisite for upholding the rule of law and ensuring that there is no discrimination in the administration of justice. We emphasize the right of equal access to justice for all, including members of vulnerable groups, and the importance of awareness-raising concerning legal rights, and in this regard we commit to taking all necessary steps to provide fair, transparent, effective, non-discriminatory and accountable services that promote access to justice for all, including legal aid.

CELAC emphasizes the importance of continuing our consideration and promotion of the rule of law in all its aspects to further develop the linkages between the rule of law and the three main pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, human rights and development.

We welcome the advances in the promotion of the rule of law at the regional level and reiterate CELAC's commitment to this objective.

Thank you.