

**UNGA71 CANZ Statement – Rule of Law**

Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak today on behalf of Australia and Canada as well as my own country, New Zealand.

CANZ would like to thank the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group and the Rule of Law Unit for its work, including for coordinating the exchange of information about rule of law activities within the UN system. In this regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's report (A/71/169), including his recommendation to revise the regulations that give effect to Article 102 of the Charter. We also recognise and support the attention given to this issue by the Security Council in discharge of its mandate.

We wish to ensure, however, that this Committee's work remains focused on substantive issues, and that it avoids lengthy debates on the mandate of each year's topic. Ten years have passed since this agenda item was first considered and we stress that the Committee should remain mindful that the debate should be balanced between discussions on the rule of law at the national and the international levels. CANZ considers that the rule of law at both of these levels is equally important, and we have supported past practice in including one subtopic each year, alternating between discussions on the rule of law at the national and international levels.

CANZ strongly emphasises the interrelated nature of the rule of law at the national and international levels. Our first topic for this debate, 'sharing national practices of States in the implementation of multilateral treaties', provides a good example of this. At the international level, multilateral treaties provide a structure for norms and standards to be codified, contributing to predictability, transparency, and equality for all Parties. This must then be translated into effective and transparent implementation at the national level to put the norms into practice for our domestic constituencies, as well as protecting the credibility of contracting Parties.

This is something that CANZ members are particularly committed to. Each CANZ country has specific rules for the implementation of multilateral treaties in domestic law. Parliamentary Treaty Examination processes provide a mechanism for engagement by members of parliament and enhanced awareness of the public and interested parties. This ensures that the resulting domestic policies and, when required, legislation are developed with the benefit of public scrutiny. It also raises awareness among the general public about our international treaty obligations and how our countries interact with others. If amendments to domestic law are required to implement a treaty, CANZ members will not ratify or accede to that treaty until the domestic implementing legislation is in place.

Chairperson,

We recognise the importance of States working to improve access to justice for all, including for the poorest and most vulnerable. In this regard, we welcome the second topic for today, 'practical measures to facilitate access to justice for all, including the poorest and most vulnerable'. Too often these vulnerable groups fall through the cracks in society, and become disenfranchised from the protections that the rule of law provides. This is not only a human rights issue. Marginalisation of individuals and communities has wider negative implications for the establishment and maintenance of stable societies.

We would like to highlight the positive impact that a number of practical measures can have in improving access to justice for all, including persons with disabilities, low-income communities, and children. These include simplifying rules of procedure for judicial hearings, supporting legal advocates to provide pro-bono work for vulnerable groups, training advocates on an inclusive approach to engagement with different groups, and providing financial or other support for vulnerable groups to obtain legal advice. Here we would reiterate the importance of strong civil society involvement, in carrying out and supporting this work.

Chairperson,

My country, New Zealand, works with both government and non-government stakeholders to support the development of legislation and judicial systems in the Pacific. This includes supporting the professional development of Pacific judicial officers; strengthening the capacity of Pacific Island courts to provide more accessible, just and efficient services; working with police to build up knowledge and skills in human rights and gender based violence issues; and improving the practical advocacy and litigation skills of Pacific Island lawyers.

Australia is supporting partners across the Indo-Pacific region to strengthen law and justice systems as a means of promoting economic prosperity and political stability. Australia's support includes promoting public access to legal information; assisting people with disability to understand their rights; developing stronger police force leadership; helping countries to ratify and implement the UN Convention against Corruption; providing technical assistance to modernise crime and policing laws; and improving the capacity of law and justice officials to respond to priority issues such as violence against women and cybercrime.

For Canada, the promotion and support of the rule of law is one of its international priorities, along with inclusive accountable governance, pluralism, respect for diversity, and human rights. Canada supports national rule of law capacity development in fragile and conflict affected areas such as in Ukraine, Haiti, Colombia, DRC, West Bank, and Afghanistan. Through its international development efforts, Canada also contributes to strengthening the rule of law and supporting access to justice initiatives for the poor, vulnerable, and most marginalized, including women and children. Domestically, the

Government of Canada is working very hard to foster an inclusive society. Access to justice is linked inextricably with this notion and this translates on a practical level into measures such as supporting victims of crime; combating elder abuse; providing financial resources to provincial and territorial partners to support legal aid; and ensuring ready access to laws in both official languages.

Chairperson,

CANZ reiterates the importance of cohesion in this Committee on the debate on the rule of law. We reiterate our hope that this Committee will recognise the equally important status of the rule of law at both the national and international levels and encourage a discussion aimed at achieving practical progress. In that context, we recommend reflecting on the last ten years of debate and considering practical topics for discussion in coming years.

Thank you.