



STATEMENT

by

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**On Behalf of the Caribbean Community
(CARICOM)**

on

Agenda Item 84: the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels

Sixth Committee (Legal Committee)

Seventy-first Session of the United Nations General Assembly

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the fourteen (14) Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

CARICOM also aligns itself with the statements delivered by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Dominican Republic on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

We also welcome the report of the Secretary General contained in document A/71/169 on strengthening and coordinating United Nations (UN) rule of law activities.

Mr. Chairman,

Pursuant to resolution 70/118, CARICOM reiterates the need for universal adherence to and implementation of the rule of law at the national and international levels which is essential for the realization of sustained economic growth, sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and hunger and the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this context, we remain committed to working towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly the third target under Goal 16 to "promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all".

CARICOM States were founded on the principles of democracy, liberty, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights and dignity. The fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual are protected and entrenched in the constitutions of our Member States and our legal systems include provisions which promote equality before the law. Moreover, our domestic legislation is buttressed by various international treaties and conventions that promote the rule of law.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM advances that the rule of law is the cornerstone for a better functioning society. CARICOM strongly adheres to this fundamental principle of the United Nations, that everyone, from the individual right up to the State, is accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated. We, therefore, underscore our strong opposition to impunity, which is contrary to the rule of law, and our commitment to promoting the highest standards of justice and equality before the law.

To this end, we recognize the importance of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to promoting the rule of law, encouraging respect for human rights and achieving sustainable peace. Further, we underscore our unequivocal commitment to the ICC and its primary objective to help out an end to impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community.

CARICOM, therefore, urges all States Parties which have not yet done so, to take the necessary steps to ratify the Kampala Amendments to the Rome Statute of the International

Criminal Court (ICC). We also welcome the most recent ratifications of the Kampala Amendments by The Netherlands and Chile, and look forward to the upcoming decision of the Assembly to activate the Court's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression in 2017.

Mr. Chairman,

We are of the view that the promotion of the rule of law at the international level must lay the foundation for the achievement of sustainable development and the protection and sustainable management of the common heritage of mankind for the benefit of present and future generations. As a group of countries from a region that is highly vulnerable to the unprecedented rate of loss of marine biodiversity and the impacts of unsustainable practices on the marine environment, particularly as it relates to the activities that are conducted in marine ecosystems beyond areas of national jurisdiction, we see the conclusion of a legally binding instrument to address these matters as inextricably linked to our pursuit of justice and fairness for all.

To this end, CARICOM welcomes the progress made during the first two (2) sessions of the Preparatory Committee established pursuant to resolution 69/292 held in 2016 on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction and look forward to the eventual adoption of this new implementing agreement under UNCLOS.

Mr. Chairman,

Under the scope of the first subtopic chosen for discussion under this agenda item on "sharing national practices of States in the implementation of multilateral treaties", CARICOM welcomes the efforts of the UN to provide assistance to support the development of national legislation, including support for constitution making and law reform, the strengthening of institutions to achieve peace, security and justice, and the protection of human rights. We also applaud the efforts of the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen national capacity for the investigation and prosecution of serious human rights violations in various countries.

CARICOM sees merit in the other subtopic for discussion under this agenda item on "access to justice for all, include the poorest and most vulnerable". Pursuant to the report of the Secretary General on this agenda item contained in document A/71/169, we endorse the view that ensuring equal access to justice for all is essential for translating the principles of the rule of law into effective mechanisms to provide protection, redress and accountability for serious crimes and human rights violations.

We, therefore, remain very concerned that many remote and poverty stricken regions are unable to access fair and equitable justice. CARICOM underscores the need for increased efforts to ensure that, consistent with international law and the rule of law, that justice is available to all without exception. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to deliver legal aid services and legal awareness to populations in remote areas.

Mr. Chairman,

In closing, CARICOM reaffirms its commitment to promoting with rule of law at the national and international levels and to upholding the principles of international law and justice and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN.