

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**OPENING REMARKS FOR THE DEBATE OF THE 6<sup>TH</sup>  
COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON AGENDA  
ITEM 84: "RULE OF LAW AT THE NATIONAL AND  
INTERNATIONAL LEVELS"**

**New York, 5 October 2016**

**Your Excellency Mr. Danny Danon, Permanent  
Representative of Israel and Chair of the Sixth Committee,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**It has been ten years since this committee started to  
discuss the rule of law at the national and international  
levels. At that time, in 2006, the Permanent Representatives  
of Mexico and Liechtenstein wrote to the President of the  
General Assembly as follows:**

**“The concept of the rule of law effectively permeates the  
[World Summit] Outcome as a whole. It is considered a  
crucial component for the realization of a number of goals,  
such as sustained economic growth, sustainable  
development and the eradication of poverty and hunger. It is  
also recognized as a goal in itself, which is essential for the  
peaceful coexistence and cooperation amongst States.”**

**And they added:**

**“The United Nations must develop ways to strengthen  
the concept of the rule of law and to promote cooperation  
and coordination for its implementation.”**

**Let me thank Mexico and Liechtenstein for their leadership, and for having acted as very able facilitators of the annual resolution on the rule of law.**

**Member States have made great strides in doing what Mexico and Liechtenstein called for: developing a common and broader understanding of what the rule of law is, and how it relates to all areas of work of the United Nations. These efforts culminated in the 2012 High Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law. The Declaration unanimously adopted on that occasion remains the cornerstone of our work.**

**Another key achievement is the inclusion of the rule of law in the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted one year ago. Goal 16 underlines the importance for development of peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice for all and effective, inclusive and accountable institutions at all levels.**

**This is a goal in its own right. It is also a critical enabler of all the other SDGs. Now is time to concretely integrate the Goals and targets - including those related to the rule of law - into national development plans. We must also ensure their implementation both at home and internationally.**

**The Sixth Committee has made progress in this area over these ten years, sharing valuable experiences from the national level, and giving the United Nations system guidance for its work.**

**At your request, last year's report of the Secretary-General included a summary of the debates in this Committee. It showed progress in areas such as promotion of the rule of law at the international level, peaceful settlement of disputes and transitional justice. Equally, progress was evident with regard to practices of Member States in implementing international law at the national level, as well as to improved access to justice.**

**The summary identified areas for further discussion. You chose one of them as a subtopic of your debate, which very much contributes to the SDGs, namely: how to enhance access to justice for the poorest and most vulnerable. The report of the Secretary-General gives examples of the UN's work in this area, as well as of your other subtopic: the implementation of multilateral treaties at the national level.**

**These two topics demonstrate the cross-cutting nature of the rule of law for the agenda of the United Nations. Your deliberations are of clear interest to those working on, for instance, development, human rights and organized crime. In turn, I am sure that your discussions can be enriched by theirs. For example, the report of the Secretary-General to the Third Committee on human rights in the administration of justice contains recommendations, which should be relevant and of interest to you.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**This is likely the last time I will address this committee in my capacity as the Chair of the UN's Rule of Law Resource and Coordination Group (ROLCRG). Let me therefore say a few words about the coordination and coherence of the rule of law assistance provided by the United Nations.**

**The Group was established in 2006 and now includes 20 United Nations entities, which have the rule of law as part of their mandates. Since the rule of law underpins the work of the Organisation as a whole, it is, in my view, one of the best examples of an area where we must truly work together – across entities and mandates. We must simply break down silos in order to deliver results.**

**It has been important to organizationally place the strategic thinking and policy coherence on the rule of law in the office of the Secretary-General, with convening power to bring together all relevant parts of the United Nations. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon entrusted this responsibility to me, and I am privileged to have served in this capacity.**

**The Global Focal Point for Police, Justice, and Corrections in post-conflict and other crisis situations has greatly improved the way in which we at Headquarters respond to requests for rule of law assistance. Joint assessments and programmes carried out by entities representing all three pillars of the United Nations -- including DPKO, UNDP, OHCHR and UN Women -- are now the rule rather than the exception.**

**At the country team level, the senior-most UN representative is to make sure that the rule of law strategy is based on national priorities, and that the support requested by the host Government is delivered in a coordinated manner.**

**Now that the rule of law has its rightful prominent place in the Sustainable Development Goals, we must ensure that we, as “One UN”, support Member States in realizing their plans and aspirations.**

**Mr. Chair,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

**Let me, finally and briefly, mention three other initiatives, which are closely connected to the rule of law and which request us to re-think the way we work.**

**First, the Human Rights up Front initiative aims to strengthen our efforts to prevent serious human rights violations through early and effective action. The initiative is helping the United Nations operate in a more cohesive, cross-cutting and “horizontal” manner.**

**Second, the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism places human rights and the rule of law at its centre. In doing so, it reinforces the central message from the three recent major reviews of peace operations, peacebuilding and women, peace and security: we must invest more in prevention.**

**Thirdly, I want to point to the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on Sustaining Peace. Rule of law is critical to preventing conflict, to sustaining peace and of course to sustainable development.**



**So, in closing, I want to thank the 6<sup>th</sup> Committee for your contributions in advancing the rule of law. It has been a pleasure to work with you on this challenge. It has been gratifying to see the gains, which are made possible when we unite behind a cause, which means so much to so many people in their search for better lives and a better future.**

**Let us continue this important work. I count on the continued support of the 6<sup>th</sup> Committee of the General Assembly for the work on rule of law.**

**Thank you.**