

**PERMANENT MISSION OF DENMARK  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

Statement by

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Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations

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**Statement on behalf of  
Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden**

**71<sup>st</sup> Session of the General Assembly  
of the United Nations**

**6<sup>th</sup> Committee  
Agenda item 84: The Rule of Law at the National and  
International Levels**

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Mr. Chairman,

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

At the outset we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his recent report *Strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities* of 20 July this year. The report highlights the important and comprehensive work of the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group and the Rule of Law Unit in the promotion of a system based on the rule of law at the national and international level.

Let me also thank the Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his presentation of the report and for his tireless dedication to the rule of law as chair of the Rule of Law Coordination and Resources Group.

The Nordic countries reiterate that the rule of law is both a principle of governance, encompassing democracy, good governance and human rights, as well as an indispensable means for the achievement of crucial common goals, including peace and security, equality and promoting economic and social development.

As stated in the Declaration of the 2012 High-Level Meeting, human rights, the rule of law and democracy are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Thus, the rule of law cuts across and undergirds all objectives of the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

The commitment to the rule of law was endorsed in relation to development by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. SDG16 importantly reflects this linkage and is dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, the provision of access to justice for all, as well as building effective and accountable institutions at all levels. Target 16.3 is a further testament to the contribution of the rule of law to peace, development, prosperity and justice.

The inclusion of the rule of law aspect in the SDG's is absolutely crucial. Because, in places where the rule of law is respected, and an independent judiciary is able to fulfil its duties to ensure justice and accountability, societies are better equipped to protect their people and to provide services for all.

As we have seen, economic development is given a much better chance in places where clear legal frameworks are enforced to boost entrepreneurship, innovation, and public and private sector investment. Confidence building generated by a functioning rule of law can serve as a direct enabler for outside investment flows and brings clarity in commercial and civil disputes.

Clear legal frameworks also help to ensure that crimes are prevented and perpetrators are brought to justice.

Mr. Chairman,

It will come as no surprise that the Nordic countries place particular emphasis on the interlinkages between the rule of law and promotion and protection of human rights.

As is often said, there can be no peace without development, no development without peace, and none of them without respect for human rights. Full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms is a central component of a society based on the rule of law. What that means is that all persons are equal before the law and everyone is entitled to the equal protection by the law without any discrimination, including disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Enhancing the rights of women and girls is a top priority for the Nordic countries. We believe discrimination, unequal distribution of resources and power can be addressed by ensuring women's and girls' equal and unhindered access to justice services and legal aid. This is critical for the achievement of gender equality. We pay close attention to ensuring a gender sensitive approach to legislative development and the development of the justice sector. Ensuring access to justice for all and ensuring that *no one is left behind* means we need to focus on those who risk marginalization and discrimination.

Special attention needs to be focused on finding ways to ensure that the disabled, ethnic minorities, children, victims of sexual-related offences, and people on the move, including refugees and internally displaced persons, can find legal remedy in case of violation of their rights. In this regard, we want to commend colleagues across UN agencies, funds and programmes, as well as the UN Human Rights Council, who work tirelessly to promote the respect for human rights across the world.

Mr. Chairman,

The Nordic countries have been strong supporters of the International Criminal Court from its establishment. And we attach great importance to strengthening the international criminal justice system.

Fighting impunity and ensuring accountability for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community is a fundamental pillar of the rule of law. It is also vital for lasting peace that justice is brought to victims of such crimes. The International Criminal Court has a key role in ensuring accountability when violations are not addressed at the national level. We encourage the UN to further strengthen its cooperation with the Court.

We also recognize the importance of the International Court of Justice, as the principal judicial organ of the UN, for the peaceful settlement of disputes. We call on member states, not yet having done so, to consider accepting the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, in accordance with the statute.

We also wish to acknowledge the valuable work being done by the International Law Commission to codify and progressively develop international law. We look forward to our discussions later this month on the Commission's comprehensive report on its work.

Mr. Chairman,

Looking ahead we will soon have a new Secretary General coming into office. And we can expect changes to be made in the Secretariat. The Nordic countries encourage the next Secretary-General to continue to give high priority to the Rule of Law in the work of the United Nations.

We would like to see that the Rule of Law Unit as well as the UN Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group is able to continue their important work in exchanging best practices and enabling experience sharing between Members States as well as across legal, political, peace and security, and development activities of the system.

Mr. Chairman, allow me a final point in closing.

While the Nordic countries very much favour a comprehensive approach to the rule of law, we have been supportive of decisions in the past years to seek to focus discussions in the 6<sup>th</sup> committee on certain aspects of the rule of law. We note, however, that having more than one topic risks fragmenting the debate and we therefore recommend that the 6<sup>th</sup> committee chooses only a single topic for next years' report.

I thank you.