

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS AT SIXTH COMMITTEE DEBATE ON THE RULE OF LAW**

**New York, 4 October 2017**

Your Excellency, Mr Burhan Gafoor, Permanent Representative of Singapore and Chair of the Sixth Committee,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be with you for the first time as Chair of the United Nations Rule of Law Resource and Coordination Group.

I look forward to working with you.

I thank Singapore, Mexico and Liechtenstein for their inclusive leadership in facilitating the annual resolution on the rule of law.

Since the creation of the United Nations, Member States have consistently emphasized the rule of law as essential for sustainable development, peace and security and human rights.

Consistent with the universality of the 2030 Agenda, it would be timely for all Member States to ensure progress in the rule of law at the national and international levels.

The essence of SDG 16 and its specific targets to promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice for all is not only a self-evident objective, but it is catalytic to all the Goals.

This would include combating all forms of organized crime; to strengthen relevant national institutions to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime; and promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws.

There is no single model for rule of law development. The rule of law requires continued attention to keep pace with how societies and the international order are evolving.

No country is excluded from this effort.

The United Nations effort in providing rule of law assistance to Member States will need to be aligned with the Secretary-General's ongoing reform agenda, including his call for the United Nations to integrate a preventive lens into all aspects of its work.

His 2017 report on "Strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities" reflects this new approach. I would like to highlight key aspects of the report.

The report includes updates and analyses of United Nations rule of law support to Member States at the national and international levels, and provides an honest reflection on why and how the United Nations must do better to support Member States in the area of the rule of law to improve people's lives.

During the reporting period, the United Nations has been providing significant rule of law assistance on every continent.

We have seen progress in Afghanistan, the State of Palestine and Somalia in their efforts to strengthen capable and accountable justice and security institutions.

The United Nations has supported the establishment of community-oriented policing programmes in Pakistan, El Salvador and Sierra Leone.

In Jordan and Lebanon, where the influx of refugees has created tensions with host communities, the United Nations is supporting national authorities to increase law enforcement capacities.

The United Nations is also working to ensure access to justice for sectors of populations that are disempowered and marginalized.

In particular, we have efforts around the globe to prevent and address sexual and gender based violence in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Iraq and the Sudan.

At the international level, the report includes the progressive and innovative contributions Member States have made to domestic justice systems to strengthen accountability for international crimes.

Examples include the Special Criminal Court in the Central African Republic and initiatives in Colombia and Guatemala.

The report also highlights progress in the codification, development and promotion of international legal frameworks, such as on climate change, ocean affairs and human rights.

It underscores the need to address the links between strengthening the rule of law and economic activity and environmental protection.

And it stresses the need to examine further how legal frameworks can promote economic and social inclusion and improve access to justice for the migrant community.

Excellencies,

The Secretary-General reminds us that we have a long way to go to address existing and emerging issues of global concern through rule of law assistance.

They encompass a wide range of topics, from climate change to migration and violence against women and girls.

They include conflicts of increasing complexity, forced mass displacement, trafficking and transnational organized crime.

I realized that the membership of the Sixth Committee is diverse.

You come from different legal traditions and have different approaches to promoting the rule of law.

But, we are all committed to the collective pursuit of peace, prosperity and justice as defined in the Charter, the International Declaration on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda.

The Secretary-General's reform agenda is designed to enable us to deliver.

But translating it into reality is a joint-effort.

We need your support.

So, this year, I invite you to guide us and help us to work differently and to do better.

How can we make United Nations rule of law assistance more effective and coherent?

How will we deliver on rule of law to make people's lives better?

For example, as highlighted in the report, the establishment of the Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections Areas in the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict and Other Crisis Situations was an innovative working arrangement.

It involved no change in line management and no creation of new structures.

This arrangement is now seen as a best practice that has improved coordination and cohesiveness in rule of law assistance.

The Secretary-General is committed to strengthening it.

He has also proposed a number of ideas for discussion in Chapter Five of the report to help the United Nations provide more effective, coherent and sustainable rule of law assistance.

As you consider the report, I invite you to frame your discussions in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets related to the rule of law. We ask you to provide guidance on how to strengthen partnerships and cooperation among Member States and to ensure they have access to available technical expertise to meet the Goals.

In addition, while recognizing that this Committee does not traditionally discuss work on peace operations, it is nonetheless important that this Committee is made aware of and examines how to measure progress on UN rule of law support in peace operations contexts.

We need to improve the articulation of benchmarks during periods of transition to the UN Country Team.

And we need to ensure that United Nations rule of law operations are sufficiently resourced and have closer links with UN country team programmes.

We also invite you to consider strategies to make international accountability mechanisms more effective, cost-efficient, sustainable and to project a positive perception among affected populations and victims of serious crimes.

This Committee is also encouraged to examine how to better evaluate the performance and impact of United Nations rule of law assistance, and to strengthen support to Member States in emerging and complex areas such as counter-terrorism, corruption, cyber-crime and trans-national organized crime.

I also invite you to identify means of building durable partnerships, particularly with regional organizations and international financial institutions, on the rule of law.

Excellencies,

As this is the Secretary-General's first report on the rule of law, he has chosen not to advance "recommendations" as such.

Instead, he is keen to engage in an open dialogue with Member States on issues that affect our ability to better provide rule of law assistance.

Should the Committee request, the Secretary-General will be pleased to provide recommendations on improving United Nations rule of law assistance in his next report.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight the importance of including sub-topics that would advance the critical priorities of the United Nations in your debate next year.

These would include how to use the rule of law to contribute to eliminating poverty, reducing inequalities, supporting gender equality, protecting the environment and creating just, inclusive and strong institutions – in short, how to assist in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In this regard, we ask the Committee to consider including in the provisional agenda of the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the General Assembly a focus on "implementation of the rule of law elements of the 2030 agenda and sharing of best practices."

I wish you a fruitful discussion and look forward to your recommendations.

Thank you.

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