

**Statement on behalf of
Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark
76th Session
of the General Assembly of the United Nations**

6th Committee

Agenda item 85:

**The Rule of Law at the National and International
Levels**

**Delivered by: Deputy Permanent Representative,
Ambassador Ms. Marie-Louise Koch Wegter**

New York

8 October 2021

Check against delivery

E-mail: nycmis@um.dk

<http://fnnewyork.um.dk>

Madam Chair,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden - and my own country - Denmark.

‘Rule of law at the national and international levels’ is a big topic. For the United Nations, the rule of law is a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. Strengthening the rule of law involves respect for the norms of international law, including on the use of force, and recognition of the primary responsibility of States to protect their populations from atrocity crimes.

Strengthening the rule of law forms an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is fundamental for its effective realisation. The Nordic countries consider it a priority to promote and uphold the Sustainable Development Goal regarding peace, justice and strong institutions. The development of inclusive and accountable justice systems and rule of law reforms will provide quality services to people and build trust in the legitimacy of their government. Judicial institutions are key factors in promoting and upholding the rule of law.

There is a continuing and worrying negative slide towards decreasing respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law in several parts of the world. This is one of the negative trends that the pandemic has exacerbated. The effective realisation of the rule of law requires adherence to the principles of supremacy of the law; equality before the law; accountability to the law; fairness in the application of the law; separation of powers; participation in decision-making; legal certainty; avoidance of arbitrariness; procedural and legal transparency. This is especially important in cases of power transitions, peaceful or by force.

Madam Chair,

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his yearly report on “*Strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities*”. The focus on the rule of law as the foundation of a revitalised social contract is highly relevant, particularly now.

We thank the Secretary-General for bringing to attention the politicization of justice institutions, attacks on national human rights institutions and erosion of hard-won progress in relation to rule of law, especially for women and girls. We also thank the Secretary-General for raising the need to place the rule of law at the centre of a renewed social contract, placing people-centred systems and institutions at the heart of global efforts.

Madam Chair,

I am delighted to inform you that earlier this year a Rule of Law Centre was established in Finland. The aim of the Centre, which operates within the University of Helsinki, is to support developing countries in creating and reinforcing the foundation of the rule of law; in developing the capacity of the rule of law institutions; and in strengthening legislation by providing expertise, training and other support. The Rule of Law Centre brings together experts on the rule of law and facilitates their networking.

Technology holds great potential for strengthening the rule of law, for instance, by making decision-making and information sharing more inclusive, efficient and transparent. At the same time, technology may present a serious challenge to the rule of law and democracy as it may be used to weaken their core aspects. The Nordic countries strongly believe that these challenges must be addressed in order to reap the benefits of technology, while mitigating the potentially subversive effects.

To this end, Denmark will host an international conference – Copenhagen: Tech for Democracy 2021 – on November 18 2021, where we want to bring States, the tech sector, media and academia and civil society around the same table to focus on specific ways to make technology support – not undermine – the of rule of law and democracy.

Lastly, we are particularly pleased that the Secretary-General's report provides for useful and specific examples of what the United Nations has done to support Member States in promoting the rule of law. We feel that ensuring effective and inclusive institutions, access to justice for all, especially women, as well as accountability are highly relevant. The numerous examples of constructive cooperation between the United Nations, Member States and other actors to promote the rule of law are encouraging.

Madam Chair,

We are convinced that the rule of law is an integral part of the solution to many of the challenges facing the international community today, including the global pandemic. These challenges require a collective response, which must be guided by the rule of law, as it is the foundation of friendly and equitable relations between states and the base of fair societies. The rule of law promotes certainty, stability, transparency and trust towards public institutions, which are all vital to solving today's challenges.