



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

750 THIRD AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10017

TEL. (212) 744-2506

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STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

79TH UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SIXTH COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM 84:

“THE RULE OF LAW AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS”

NEW YORK, 17TH OCTOBER 2024

Mr. Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

I am honoured to deliver an intervention on the rule of law at the national and international levels on behalf of the Polish delegation. Poland aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union.

Allow me to start with some observations of a general nature.

The rule of law is a pillar of the rules-based international order and is indispensable for restoring peace and security in international relations. It shapes our collective aspiration for a world governed by fairness, equality and respect for human dignity.

At the national level, the rule of law is the bedrock upon which democratic societies are built. It ensures that all individuals, regardless of status, are subject to the law, and that no one is above it. In other words, the rule of law is the shield that protects citizens from abuses of power. This concept is not just an abstract ideal. It is a practical framework that upholds human rights, promotes equality, and safeguards the freedoms we cherish.

At the international level, the rule of law is the framework that governs relations between states. It ensures that no nation, no matter how powerful, can act unilaterally in contravention of international law without being held accountable. International law provides the framework through which we resolve conflicts, address global challenges, and promote peace and security. The United Nations itself, founded on the principles of sovereign equality and respect for international obligations, stands as the ultimate symbol of our shared commitment to this precept.

It is crucial to stress the interdependence between the rule of law's national and international dimensions. A case in point is Russia, where years of authoritarian rule and growing repression at home paved the way for breaches of the most fundamental norms of international law,

first by an act of aggression against Georgia, and then through an even larger one against Ukraine.

Fostering the rule of law on the national level is thus a vital interest of the whole international community. It needs to be supported and strengthened by all states, while international organizations, including the UN, also have a very important role to play here.

Mr. Chair,

Poland welcomes the Report of the UN Secretary-General on strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities, dated 3 July 2024 (A/79/117). We commend the efforts described in the report aimed at buttressing the rule of law in countries that need it.

For Poland, UN involvement in advancing accountability for violations of international law and other serious crimes, especially in Ukraine but also elsewhere, is of the utmost importance.

I wish to dwell a bit here on the subject of accountability, which is one of the most relevant elements of the rule of law.

For effective accountability, the role of international courts – in particular, the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court – cannot be stressed enough. These bodies play a pivotal role in holding states and individuals accountable for violations of international law, including international crimes. It is our view that the international justice system could be strengthened if more states accepted the ICJ's compulsory jurisdiction and ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. It should go without saying that the decisions of international courts ought to be respected and implemented in a timely manner.

For years, Poland has been a strong and active supporter of both the ICJ and the ICC. We have been involved in proceedings over the

Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation) before the ICJ, where we filed a declaration of intervention under Article 63 of the ICJ Statute. Furthermore, we are the only intervener to have filed an additional intervention as a state with a special interest in the case under Article 62 of the Statute.

At the same time, we need to point out that the crime of aggression remains outside the ICC's jurisdiction. This is why Poland has supported the idea of a new tribunal to try Russia's crime of aggression against Ukraine. We are working towards this goal through the core group on establishing a special tribunal, as we believe that its creation would strengthen the rule of law.

We have supported regional courts, too. Poland intervened as a third party in Ukraine's case before the European Court of Human Rights on human rights violations committed by Russia during its ongoing aggression against Ukraine. But, we also attach importance to strengthening the domestic mechanisms ensuring the rule of law. In this spirit we are currently working on a bill regarding the execution of Strasbourg Court judgements.

Poland believes that holding perpetrators accountable must go hand in hand with ensuring compensation to the victims. For this reason, Poland strongly supports efforts to establish an international mechanism to compensate Ukraine and its citizens for the damage and harm inflicted on them from Russia's aggression. We have joined to the agreement on a Registry of Damages for Ukraine and are helping prepare the way for a claims commission to settle claims entered in the Registry.

Mr. Chair,

We agree with the focus in the Secretary General's report on the importance of the development and codification of international instruments, norms and standards, along with their promotion.

Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, Poland signed the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction and is currently working on its ratification.

Furthermore, we strongly support the international community's efforts to improve our understanding of international law's applicability to cyberspace. Poland issued its national position on this subject in 2022. We encourage all states that have not yet done so to prepare their own positions on this issue.

Mr. Chair,

We commend UN activities, including capacity-building and technical assistance, undertaken to support full, equal and equitable participation in the international legal system at all levels. It is crucial to strengthen the rule of law in international relations by ensuring that all states have a say in negotiating instruments and participating in discussions on how international law should be interpreted and implemented.

In the field of international human rights law, Poland for years has contributed to a trust fund dedicated to supporting the participation of LDCs and SIDS representatives in the work of the Human Rights Council. This year, we increased our contribution to this fund by 100% and encourage other states to do likewise.

Mr. Chair,

I wish to conclude by urging each member state to reaffirm its dedication to the rule of law. Such affirmation is more important than ever today, when the basic tenets of international law are being flagrantly violated. Let us work together to hold perpetrators accountable, while promoting an international order based on fairness, equality and peace.

I feel confident that our common effort will strengthen the rule of law at the national and international levels. By doing so, we will help the international community adequately respond to the challenges and threats it faces today.

I thank you.