



PERMANENT MISSION OF FINLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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Rule of Law at the National and International Levels

Statement

on behalf of the Nordic countries

by
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(check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

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

We thank the Secretary-General for his report of 24 July 2014 where he highlights the broad range of the United Nations work with the aim of supporting the national practices to improve access to justice. How to strengthen the rule of law both at the national and international levels is a primary concern to us. We are grateful for the efforts of the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group and the Rule of Law Unit in enhancing a coordinated UN approach in the area of the rule of law.

The Nordic countries welcome the role of the United Nations, including the International Law Commission, in promoting the codification and progressive development of international law as a legal framework of the whole international community. We urge the UN to intensify its efforts in promoting visions, norms, standards, understandings and practices on the rule of law.

The Nordic countries reaffirm their strong support to the international courts and tribunals in their work for peaceful settlement of disputes and promotion of access to justice. 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.

The Nordic countries attach great importance to strengthening the international criminal justice system. The current crises around the world, involving massive international crimes, have highlighted the need for enhanced international efforts in this regard. The International Criminal Court has a key role in ensuring accountability when violations are not addressed at the national level. We encourage the United Nations to continue and further strengthen its cooperation with the ICC. Another important tool is Justice Rapid Response which offers high quality assistance and expertise to national governments for the investigation and prosecution of atrocity crimes.

The impact of conflicts on various aspects of development is obvious. A key means for preventing and addressing conflict is the Responsibility to Protect. It provides - among other things - a broad policy agenda for early warning and assistance. We also welcome the UN initiatives, such as the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front Action Plan, to respond more effectively to the risks of serious violations of human rights or of humanitarian law.

Terror groups continue to commit atrocities and challenge the rule of law, but it is also important that all counter-terrorism activities are consistent with human rights and the rule of law. Failure to meet rule of law standards may make such efforts less effective, and even contribute to increased radicalization.

The Declaration of the 2012 High-Level Meeting of the General-Assembly affirmed the inter-linkages of the rule of law with the three main pillars of the UN activities:

peace and security, human rights and development. We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts in enhancing coordination and coherence of rule of law issues across the whole UN system both at the Headquarters and at country levels. Strengthening the rule of law at the national and international levels is only achievable through a comprehensive approach from the UN and its member states.

This is the reason why we believe, Mr. Chairman, that a broad and cross-cutting discussion should take place within the UN as a follow-up of the High-Level Meeting. A forward-looking strategy or plan of action could be agreed upon to make our common goals a reality. Other stakeholders should be included in this discussion and the implementation of pledges monitored.

The Nordic countries firmly adhere to the core principles of the rule of law: legality, equality, accountability and participation. Full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms is a central component of a society based on the rule of law. It means that everyone is equal before the law and everyone is entitled to the equal protection by the law without any discrimination, including disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable persons. Good governance is delivered by working democratic institutions and mechanisms for a broad participation in decision-making processes at all levels. In a well-functioning society, the executive and politicians are accountable to citizens.

An independent and efficient court system, as a basic requirement of the rule of law, will ensure the fair adjudication of legal disputes and effective remedies, particularly in cases of human rights violations. A separation of powers between the legislature, executive and judiciary sectors is a guarantee of the independence of the judiciary. Integrity of the judiciary, law enforcement and prosecutorial bodies should be ensured. The authority and independence of the judiciary and individual judges should be respected and protected. The UN support to constitution drafting and legal reforms at country levels is crucial.

Strengthening the rule of law and access to justice will foster enabling environment for sustained economic growth and reduction of poverty. Adequate and solid legal frameworks are needed to boost entrepreneurship as well as public and private sector investment.

The rule of law and development are closely interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Our common objective is sustainable development, poverty eradication and inclusive growth of our societies. It is our view that the rule of law should have a visible role in the Post-2015 Development Agenda as a separate goal. Ensuring access to legal identity for all persons would be a first step in the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, establishment of efficient and accountable institutions, and in ensuring access to justice for all.

Mr. Chairman,

The Nordic countries attach great importance to the equal rights of men and women to fully and equally participate in decision-making, institutions of governance and

justice. The civil society also plays an essential role in advancing the rule of law at the national and international levels as an agent for awareness raising, fact finding and advocacy, facilitator of dialogue and provider of assistance to victims. We must make certain that our close cooperation with other stakeholders will continue in promoting the rule of law and access to justice.

I thank you.