



Finland to the UN Security Council in 2013–2014

United Nations
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High Level Meeting on the Rule of Law
at the National and International Levels

Statement on behalf of the Nordic countries
Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden

H.E. Mr. Sauli Niinistö
President of the Republic of Finland

New York, 24 September 2012

(check against delivery)

Mr. President,

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries:
Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country Finland.

We express our sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for his welcome vision on how the rule of law should be developed at the national and international levels. Respect for the rule of law is critical for the main pillars of the UN: international peace and security, human rights and development.

The rule of law requires a comprehensive approach. We fully support the Secretary-General's efforts to integrate the rule of law in all activities of the United Nations and salute the work the UN does to assist Member States to strengthen the rule of law.

Mr. President,

The rule of law is a core principle with its main components: legality, equality, accountability and participation. The Nordic countries reaffirm our strong commitment to these principles. In other words: all are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. Those who are disadvantaged, marginalised or vulnerable deserve our particular attention.

Women and men have equal right to participate in decision-making, institutions of governance and justice. Legislation should be amended and institutions reformed to ensure realization of human rights, and to guarantee everybody a life free from discrimination and violence.

Mr. President,

The International Court of Justice is central to upholding the rule of law. It is our firm belief that the Court is an underused tool for peaceful resolution of conflicts. We call on Member States, not yet having done so, to consider accepting the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court, in accordance with the Statute.

Impunity cannot be tolerated. In its ten years of existence the International Criminal Court has become a major actor in fighting impunity for the most serious international crimes. The Nordic countries are committed to promoting the universal ratification and effective implementation of the Rome Statute. This includes the principle of complementarity and full cooperation with the Court. We call upon all Member States to join the Statute.

Attention must also be paid to the victims. The Rome Statute system, which includes the Trust Fund for Victims, plays an important restorative function.

Mr. President,

We join the Secretary-General in calling on all Member States to grant all individuals their full right to association and assembly. We should support civil society organisations and give them necessary legislative and political space to thrive.

The civil society plays an important role in advancing the rule of law. They are carriers of ideas, providers of assistance, technical expertise and information, and facilitators of dialogue. We should make sure that the follow-up of this process continues in close cooperation with civil society actors.

Mr. President,

This High Level Meeting marks the beginning of a new phase in strengthening the rule of law. We have adopted an outcome document that guides us in our future work. This is an agenda for peace. This is an agenda for sustained economic growth and sustainable development. A world free from poverty and hunger. A world where the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms is secured for all alike.

What we need now is concrete action to convert our political will to benefits on the ground. The Nordic countries welcome recent initiatives in the UN to enhance coherence and effectiveness of the rule of law work. We encourage the UN to continue these efforts further. We also welcome the idea of the pledges and today we commit ourselves to several initiatives.

We firmly believe that a strong rule of law perspective should be included in the post-2015 international development agenda. We hope we can one day agree on a set of rule of law goals to better prioritize our action.

Our future agenda of the rule of law is broad and cross-cutting. We look forward to cooperating with all of you.