

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
General Assembly
24 September 2012

**Remarks to High-Level Meeting of the General
Assembly on the Rule of Law**

L'état de droit est comme la loi de la pesanteur. C'est lui qui fait que notre monde et nos sociétés restent soudés, que l'ordre prévaut sur le chaos. Il nous rassemble autour de valeurs communes; il nous ancre dans le bien commun.

Mais contrairement à la loi de la pesanteur, l'état de droit ne se manifeste pas spontanément. Il doit être nourri par les efforts continus et concertés de dirigeants véritables.

Aujourd'hui, des chefs de gouvernement, des ministres de la justice, des procureurs généraux et des représentants de la société civile se réunissent dans cette salle pour la première fois afin de débattre exclusivement du renforcement de la justice pour les habitants de tous les pays du monde.

L'attente fut longue. Mais cela fait des dizaines d'années que l'Organisation des Nations Unies s'attelle à renforcer l'état de droit, et la réunion d'aujourd'hui reflète un mouvement mondial de plus en plus vaste réunissant de simples citoyens qui réclament la justice, le respect du principe de responsabilité et la fin de l'impunité.

Nous savons que renforcer l'état de droit, c'est consolider les trois piliers de l'Organisation des Nations Unies : la paix, le développement et les droits de l'homme.

La justice n'est pas une notion abstraite. C'est une carte d'électeur, un contrat en bonne et due forme, le badge d'un policier qui inspire la confiance et le certificat de naissance qui fait qu'une petite fille aura une existence officielle.

La veuve qui n'hérite de rien, le militant des droits de l'homme qui subit des représailles et la victime d'atteintes sexuelles, tous ont besoin de l'état de droit pour obtenir justice.

The Charter of the United Nations – the Constitution of the international community – provides indispensable tools to deepen the rule of law: the universal standard-setting power of the General Assembly ... the enforcement power of the Security Council ... the judicial power of the International Court of Justice.

The wider body of international law developed at the United Nations gives the international community a basis to cooperate and peacefully resolve conflicts – and the means to ensure that there is no relapse of fighting.

And with the development of accountability mechanisms, no war criminal should ever find safe harbour in the modern world.

The rule of law is also fundamental to development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Today's discussion should strengthen our resolve to ensure that the post-2015 international development agenda takes full account of the rule of law.

I am proud that the United Nations is promoting the rule of law in more than 150 countries.

I am grateful for the many voluntary pledges being made today.

I thank the governments that have made the commitments.

But I ask for concrete action in five specific areas.

First, I call on all States to commit to the equal application of the law at both the national and international levels. There should be no selectivity in applying resolutions, decisions and laws. We cannot allow political self-interest to undermine justice.

Second, I call on Heads of State and Government to uphold the highest standards of the rule of law in their decision making at all times. The rule of law must be the foundation for every government action.

Third, I call on all Heads of State and Government to accept the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.

Fourth, I urge Member States to support peace by strengthening UN initiatives in the field of the rule of law: training police, improving corrections and enhancing the judiciary in fragile and conflict-torn countries around the world.

Fifth, and fundamentally, I urge you to adopt the solemn declaration that is before you to make the most of this truly historic occasion to commit to respect for international law and justice and to an international order based on the rule of law.

Civil society plays a crucial role in holding leaders to account, and I urge you to keep pushing for action in all of these action areas to give the rule of law the place it deserves.

It is not enough to disperse our rule of law activities across the United Nations agenda. They deserve a central place in the structure of our work.

I count on you to help forge a new, structured approach to strengthening the rule of law and delivering justice so we can achieve peace, development and human rights.

Strengthening the rule of law is for every country and is in everyone's interest.

It is as essential within countries as it is among the family of nations.

Today's meeting is a milestone – but it is not an end in itself. Our challenge now is to follow up, generate momentum and continue to give a high profile to this essential foundation for a better future.

Thank you.