

UNITED NATIONS



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**REMARKS FOR THE SIXTH COMMITTEE DEBATE
ON THE RULE OF LAW**

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Mr Chairperson, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

I am pleased to be with you today. Let me thank Chile, Mexico and Liechtenstein for their able leadership in facilitating the

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and international levels”, the world has*

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livelihoods affected, more than one hundred million people risk sliding back into

a safe and secure environment, to guarantee the functioning of efficient institutions and basic services, including the safeguarding of human rights and the rule of law, and a capable administration – without these components a social contract is simply ruptured. A world in which so many people are being left behind is, by definition, a world destined to endure continued instability and pain.

Against this backdrop, it is clear that we must combine all of our tools in a more effective way. In particular, it is time to take advantage of the near-total overlap between our sustainable development goals and our human rights instruments. In the context of the pandemic, it became abundantly clear that a human rights lens underpins the rule of law and is necessary in whatever we do to tackle and emerge from the pandemic, and, especially, to prioritize those most at risk of being left behind.

Earlier this year the Secretary-General launched the *Call to Action for Human Rights* —that provides concrete solutions in this regard, focusing in particular on areas where people are most at risk or where there is an opportunity at hand to make substantial progress. In areas such as sustainable development, gender equality, civic space, future generations, climate change and the digital world, specific steps are envisaged to advance the human rights and

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Yet even before the pandemic, the rule of law in a number of countries has been challenged by deep divisions and entrenched political polarisation, as well as dysfunctional, underfunded institutions not readily accessible to the public and not always effective in preventing and resolving people's daily problems.

Countries continue to struggle with systemic shortcomings characterized by a lack of accountability, and high levels of corruption in a system of governance that does not address structural inequalities, empower women or effectively serve all members of society. These trends eroded the trust between states and populations and contributed to a dangerous erosion in the social contract in many parts of the world.

Restoring that trust, and the underlying social contract, must be a priority as we emerge from this pandemic. We cannot afford to go back to the world the way it was. The Secretary-

and girls by facilitating safe access to remote counselling and support services during the pandemic. Of course much more needs to be done to help address the daily socio-economic injustices that women will continue to experience post-pandemic, including on issues around family law, health-care, inheritance, employment, securing loans and setting up businesses.

In keeping with the Secretary-General's reforms to advance an integrated approach, peace operations and UN Country Teams are pooling resources and working together to provide comprehensive rule of law assistance in ensuring effective, inclusive and accountable justice and security institutions; supporting crime prevention and armed violence reduction; strengthening access to justice for all; and promoting accountability for serious human rights violations and inclusive transitional justice processes.

Similarly, on the international plane, if an agreed code of conduct, crafted through international treaties (A/HRC/17/81, 6) 1.34 CID 4Cw(1

inequalities that are part and parcel of people's lives in many societies, including for indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, minorities, refugees, the displaced, migrants and stateless individuals.

And for many people in all regions, corruption and the lack of integrity and accountability have been a long-standing source of distrust towards governments and political elites. Corruption in the time of COVID-19 is even more damaging as it risks diverting much needed resources from those in need.

The UN General Assembly Special Session [UNGASS] in 2021 will hence be an important opportunity for Member States to share national experiences and good practices, and to identify new approaches in the fight against corruption.

At a more general level, this pandemic has prompted us to re-imagine the way rule of law and justice systems can work during any global crisis; and to develop more resilient governance models to achieve the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in a post-COVID world and to deliver on the priority goal number one – climate action.

As we prepare for responding to the mandate provided to the Secretary-General in the UN75 Declaration, we seek to understand better the changing rule of law and security landscape in building and sustaining peace; to adapt accordingly and strengthen support to Member States, including in areas such as climate justice,

Let me elaborate on this a little further and leave a thought with you. In the 20th Century it became clear that there was a need to develop a sense of responsibility for our actions, both in terms of their global implications but also in relation to future generations. This sense of responsibility was expressed in a number of international instruments, such as the 1997 UNESCO Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations.

The build-up of nuclear arms during the Cold War, for example, was [and continues to be] a very real threat. For the first time in history, human beings possessed the capacity and power to destroy our planet and to wipe out future generations. In the 21st Century, climate change is comparable to last century's nuclear arms race, and calls for an acceptance of responsibility, which in turn needs to be translated into concrete and collective action.

Yet all too often the debate around these issues is characterised by "traditional" analysis: by thinking inside an old box. It is important to ask ourselves what type of international, regional and national governance and rule of law structures we would need today to take into account global responsibilities and inter-generational rights and justice, especially on climate action, the environment and biodiversity. The pandemic has indeed made that wake-up call all the more pressing.

The development of the "*Common Agenda for the Future*" is therefore a real and urgent opportunity to tackle these crucial issues. The Secretary-General and all of us look forward to engaging with you and other partners on its development.

Thank you for your attention.