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2021 UNDP Annual Meeting

Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Rights for Sustaining Peace and Fostering
Development

PEOPLE CENTERED APPROACHES TO RULE OF LAW, SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS - SECONDARY IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Virtual | June 22 to 24

Concept Note

The meeting aims to promote an exchange between Member States, practitioners, UNDP and UN experts, Ministerial-level national counterparts, as well as representatives from think tanks, academia, and civil society, on the current development context in relation to rule of law, security, and human rights, and how it has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. While reflecting on the achievements of 2020, we will take a close look at the complexity and challenges of the continuing crisis, as well as the various opportunities offered for furthering a more accountable, inclusive, and just future.

- Showcase “people-centered” approaches in the rule of law, security, justice, and human rights spheres built in partnership with governments, civil society, and the business sector while looking to new and innovative ways of working;
- Consider the growing impact of digitalization and use of new technologies in the rule of law sector globally, including opportunities and challenges, particularly related to transparency, data collection and privacy rights;
- Discuss our Gender Justice Partnership with UN Women to better understand the threats and challenges women leaders face in the justice sector;
- Review renewed efforts to frame and implement a people-centered approach to security;
- Examine accountability mechanisms for human rights including actions from the business sector, State and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI’s);
- Look to the future of justice and how we can combat the inheritance of inequalities, inequities, and systemic racism.

Many of our country offices have raced ahead in these areas, particularly digitization, and the Annual Meeting will explore lessons learnt and foster cross regional learning, which will be reflected in the new phase IV (2022-2025) Global Programme on Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Rights for Sustaining Peace and Fostering Development.

Background

The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated and highlighted inequalities, marginalization and exclusion and exposed Government inability to deliver public services and structural barriers have impeded citizen access, most often to marginalized and vulnerable groups, to claim their rights and participate in public life. For the

first time since 2001¹, the majority of the global population (54%) live in autocracies. Civic space, long considered a fundamental component of open and democratic societies, remains in decline. CIVICUS report that 87 per cent of the world's population do not enjoy open societies and the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in more strain being placed on civic space and human rights across all contexts. In 2020, we saw people from diverse backgrounds and across generations united—locally, nationally and globally—to demand less exclusion and oppression and more rights and accountability. Lockdown measures initially slowed the protest surge, but by April 2020 new anti-government protests were occurring every four days.² The groups hit hardest by the pandemic are the same groups that have long-experienced **systemic discrimination and exclusion**. Faced with growing social unrest, many governments responded by using laws, measures, and physical force to suppress unwelcome public dissent. As the pandemic continues, the relationship between governments and their populations are becoming increasingly strained.

The pandemic has brought to the forefront new ways of working and is an opportunity to reinforce a **people centered, human rights-based approach** for our work in the rule of law and human rights spheres. Looking ahead, our work towards supporting more just, inclusive, and responsive structures and systems, must be grounded in respect for human dignity and human rights as articulated by **the Secretary-General's Call to Action on Human Rights**³. The demand for better justice and security institutions must be met by more accountable, responsive and 'people-centered' approaches ensuring that no one is left behind. The current crisis has forced us to rethink how we **deliver justice services** using new technologies and digital support while simultaneously safeguarding rights and freedoms.

The crisis has exacerbated pre-existing justice gaps, such as effectively addressing Gender Based Violence and implementing institutional reforms that improve the quality and breadth of justice services. The crisis in conjunction with rising social movements have created an urgency to addressing these systemic inequalities and delivering a new social contract responsive to our new social context. This includes addressing the issues emanating from the current crisis, such as **gender inequality, threats to women leaders and discriminatory practices**. 2020 has forced us to reconsider old ways of working and ensuring a people centered approach when striving for peace and prosperity. We recognize the need to engage with the **business sector and national human rights systems to support accountability, respect, and enforcement of human rights**.

The **Sustainable Development Goals** — which are underpinned by human rights and respect for the rule of law — provide the framework for more inclusive and sustainable economies and societies. UNDP recognizes that the SDG's rely on governance systems which are inclusive, accountable, and responsive. At the same time, the means and methodologies of governance systems are rapidly transforming through advancements in the digital sphere and by the changing terrain of communication. Strengthening security to prevent and address new forms of violence within the rule of law and in full respect of human rights law and principles is fundamental. UNDP has developed a people-centered approach to security in partnership with security experts, human rights bodies and justice practitioners, which aims to support national stakeholders to reduce conflict-related deaths and all forms of violence within broader stabilization, peacebuilding and recovery initiatives. UNDP also supports those willing to exit armed groups and violence so former members can reintegrate peacefully into civilian life, with due regard to justice and accountability.

¹ V-Dem Institute. Autocratization Surges—Resistance Grows Democracy Report 2020. https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/de/39/de39af54-0bc5-4421-89ae-fb20dcc53dba/democracy_report.pdf

² Carnegie Global Protest Tracker

³ The Call to Action highlights 7 thematic areas for action which highlights where concerted system-wide and individual efforts within the UN are needed to achieve a 'quantum leap' in progress or avert backsliding in human rights. UNDP platforms, presences and programmes are critical to the Call to Action and UNDP been at the centre of support to implementation of the Call to Action.

As we face a myriad of layered global challenges that impact on progress towards achieving **Agenda 2030**, the goals of peace, justice and inclusion can seem out of reach. UNDP is committed to forging a new social contract, premised on a just and inclusive future where humanity thrives in dignity.

UNDP's Global Programme on Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Rights for Sustaining Peace and Fostering Development (2016-2021) supports these commitments and aims to ensure people centered approaches to increase access to justice, provide security and protections for human rights in contexts affected by conflict, crisis and fragility. The Global Programme leverages the capabilities of UNDP and the UN system by addressing both the supply and demand-sides of justice, security, and human rights. Our support for accessible, effective services (with emphasis on women, marginalized and vulnerable groups) is undertaken in some of the world's most complex contexts, such as, the Sahel region, Somalia, and Afghanistan.

Partnerships

Understanding the linkages between the rule of law and human rights, as well as the COVID-19 context and its effects on the three pillars of the UN Charter – development, peace and security and human rights is a priority. This aligns with UNDP's commitment to support the humanitarian-development nexus, UN system reforms, cross system working and breaking down of silos. The rule of law and human rights have been recognized as key areas through which the organization can support transformational change at the local, national, regional, and global level.

UNDP's Annual Rule of Law Meeting is an opportunity to showcase and reaffirm various partnerships such as the **Global Focal Point for Rule of Law (GFP)** – co-led by UNDP and the UN Department of Peace Operations, the **Tri-Partite Partnership to Support National Human Rights Institutions (TPP)** with OHCHR and GANHRI, **Saving Lives Entity (SALIENT)** with UNODA, the joint UNDP-UNHCR partnership on **Rule of Law and Local Governance**, the **Gender Justice Partnership** with UN Women, **UNDP-OHCHR** partnership on engaging with human rights mechanisms for sustainable development, in addition to other engagements across the system in the rule of law and human rights.

Description of Virtual Event

The Annual Meeting will be held in the format of a virtual forum from June 22-24. Participants will include high-level UN officials, Permanent Representatives, Ministerial-level national counterparts, Member States, and stakeholders from across the UN system, as well as representatives from think tanks, academia, and civil society.

The meeting will start on the morning of **Tuesday 22 June** with the opening session led by the UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner focusing on rule of law and human rights as the building blocks for development.

This will be followed by a discussion on **putting people at the centre of security efforts** followed by a joint session with UN Women on **women's transformative power** in inclusive justice processes.

Wednesday 23 June will commence with a panel on supporting **accountability for human rights** followed by an exchange on the **challenges and impacts of new technologies on rule of law and human rights**. The forum will end with a final reflection **on justice futures, systematic racism, and inequalities**.

On **Thursday June 24** there will be a by invitation only partners meeting.