

**Mr. President,
Ladies and gentlemen, members,
Dear panelists,
Dear participants.**

Burkina Faso, the country of men of integrity, which I have the honor to represent, is very honored to take part in this important meeting on the theme "The future we want to see: rule of law and human rights, securing the social contract".

Allow me, first of all, to convey the fraternal greetings of the people of Burkina Faso to all the stakeholders in this meeting.

At the instigation of His Excellency Rock Marc Christian KABORE, President of Faso, Burkina Faso has made the fight against the COVID 19 pandemic a priority.

As a reminder, since the appearance of the covid 19 pandemic in the world, the Government of Burkina Faso has set up a national response committee, responsible for ensuring surveillance of the disease through the implementation of a response plan. However, the first case of coronavirus was detected on 09 March 2020 in Burkina Faso. As soon as this case was announced, a set of measures accompanied by awareness-raising actions were taken to protect the population in strict respect of human rights.

These measures included the closure of places of worship, schools and markets, a ban on all gatherings of more than fifty people, the closure of land and air borders, the quarantine of all cities that had registered at least one positive Covid-19 case, and a curfew during the night.

In addition to these measures and in order to reduce impact on the lives of the population, the Government issued a decree to reduce prices of basic consumer goods or make them free of charge for the benefit of the population. These include the consumption of water and electricity. In addition, tax relief measures have been introduced for the benefit of companies.

**Mr. President,
Ladies and gentlemen.**

In addition to the covid 19 pandemic, Burkina Faso faces insecurity linked to terrorist attacks and community conflicts. Aware of the significance and importance of justice for the rule of law, the Government has undertaken reforms with a view to consolidating the promotion and effectiveness of human rights since 2016.

These reforms have focused on strengthening the independence of the judiciary, in particular by disconnecting the Higher Council of the Judiciary from the executive branch, the recruitment of more than 200 judges on an exceptional basis, and improving access to justice through the operationalization of a fund for judicial assistance to assist indigent persons in legal proceedings, the construction of three new courts and prison facilities with a view to bringing justice closer to the litigants, legislative reforms through the review of certain legal texts, including the penal code, the code of criminal procedure and the law on the organisation of the judiciary.

In the context of peacebuilding and conflict prevention, it is worth noting the experimentation with penal mediation in the country's pilot jurisdictions, the initial results of which are conclusive. This mechanism enables judicial actors to call upon the intervention of other actors, including customary chiefs and religious leaders, in the resolution of certain conflicts.

In addition to the justice system, other public institutions are involved in the prevention and resolution of community or social conflicts. These include the Ministry of Human Rights and Civic Promotion, the Ministry for Social Cohesion, the Ombudsman of Faso, the High Council for Reconciliation and National Unity and the High Council for Social Dialogue, among others.

**Mr. President,
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At this stage, I would like to point out that in Burkina Faso, in addition to the courts, penitentiary administration is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice. Thus, the rest of my intervention will concern both the findings and reforms in the two components of the justice sector.

Returning to the subject, it should be stressed that, despite the measures taken by the Government, covid 19 has had a negative impact on the normal functioning of the courts.

Indeed, the pandemic resulted in the slowing down of jurisdictional activity and then its suspension. This suspension had a negative impact on the rights of litigants, particularly with regard to the time limits for appeal, detention and enforcement of decisions. A large number of hearings initially scheduled could not be held, deferring the judicial decisions expected by the litigants.

Moreover, it has led to a budgetary regulation of more than 26% of the budget of the Ministry of Justice, which has called into question the ambitions and hence the protection of the rights of the population. The completion of certain court buildings and their equipment will be delayed, as will financial assistance for indigent persons, the holding of criminal hearings lengthens detention periods, and so on.

Mr. President,

Faced with that situation, my country has taken preventive measures from the very first moments of the pandemic in the area of justice. Thus, in addition to the health measures decreed throughout the country (mandatory wearing of masks, hand washing, physical distancing, etc.), a departmental crisis committee has been set up to reflect on measures to prevent and manage the pandemic.

On the proposal of this committee, I decided to suspend visits to prisoners in prisons. Similarly, additional measures have been taken, including the decongestion of prisons with a view to reducing the risk of the spread of the disease in the prison environment through the exceptional release of more than 1,207 inmates, the suspension of jurisdictional activities, and the provision of hygiene kits to court staff to prevent covid 19.

Mr. President,

With regard to emergency and structural response plans and programmes, my Department has included in the Emergency Programme for the Sahel (a region of Burkina Faso) the improvement of access to justice in regions affected by terrorism through the intensification of the issuance of official documents, including to internally displaced persons, the holding of delocalized hearings and the holding of criminal hearings.

In addition, actions aimed at improving the fight against terrorism and crime have been included. These include the organization of consultation frameworks and joint training aimed at strengthening cooperation between prosecutors/investigating magistrates and judicial police officers; strengthening cooperation between the judicial authorities, the civil authorities and the internal security forces, in particular to deal with the rise in organized crime or crime generated by pressure from internally displaced persons; setting up a framework for the exchange of all structures involved in the fight against terrorism; and strengthening the infrastructure and equipment of priority detention centers.

As previously noted, budgetary regulation seriously compromises the implementation of the activities planned under the Emergency Programme for the Sahel.

Mr. President,

The security issue remains a major concern for my country, which is subject to recurrent terrorist attacks.

Generally speaking, in the justice sector, in 2020 the Government revised the texts establishing the Special Brigade for Counter-Terrorism Investigations and the Fight against Organized Crime. These new powers will enable it to better meet the needs of investigation and evidence gathering in the field of counter-terrorism and the fight against organized crime.

A specialized unit for the containment of acts of terrorism has also been created within the Ouaga II High Court. The purpose of the specialized pole is to centralize and coordinate the suppression of acts of terrorism and the financing of terrorism in Burkina Faso.

With regard in particular to the reforms taken in the area of security related to the pandemic in prisons, it was decided to put health security ahead of physical and/or military security. Indeed, health checks, taking of temperature, compulsory wearing of masks, searching for signs of COVID19, searching for the notion of contact with a covid19, hand washing; is the first procedure before any military control procedure (identity, body searches, package searches...).

Also, my department has undertaken the installation of isolation rooms for the quarantine of new arrivals, the isolation of suspicious cases, contact cases and confirmed cases. The facilities also include corridors to receive visitors and families of detainees in order to respect the preventive measures (physical distance of 1.5 meters).

The same applies to the provision of protective masks for all detainees and the organization of practical training for prison health workers on the clinical management of possible covid19 cases in detention.

All these measures are aimed at preventing and anticipating the management of cases of covid19 infection.

**Mr. President,
Ladies and gentlemen, members,
Dear participants.**

By taking part in this important meeting, Burkina Faso wishes, on the one hand, to be enriched by the experience of other nations of the world and, on the other hand, to benefit from the technical and financial support of countries of brothers and friends, the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, international non-governmental organizations and all resource persons so that the political will strongly displayed through the actions already undertaken becomes a reality for the promotion and effectiveness of the rule of law and human rights.

In conclusion, I would like to express once again my sincere gratitude and congratulations to you, Mr. President, and to UNDP for holding this session on a regular basis for the promotion of human rights.

This forum provides an excellent opportunity for exchanges, sharing and evaluation of best practices in the protection and promotion of human rights.

THANK YOU.