

## Declaration on Equal Access to Justice for All by 2030

February 7 2019, The Hague

On February 7, 2019, Ministers and high-level representatives from countries and international organisations convened in The Hague to come to a shared understanding of the opportunities to strengthen support and commitment for access to justice ahead of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and the SDG Summit in 2019.

Participants explored strategies for the achievement of SDG 16.3 “equal access to justice for all” and discussed opportunities for implementation of innovative models, identified barriers and obstacles to reform and considered recommendations and potential commitments to deliver on access to justice for all.

Participants recalled that the 2030 Agenda is based on a vision of a “just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met.” The SDGs contain a pledge to leave no-one behind.

Participants considered that many people live outside the protection of the law and lack access to reliable and fair mechanisms to solve disputes. It is estimated that across the world, billions of people (men, women and children) have unresolved justice problems.

Participants further noted that unresolved legal problems impact negatively on the health, income and productivity of individuals and communities. Societies and economies bear the associated costs of having large numbers of unresolved justice problems. This affects economic growth, and may exacerbate inequality and can fuel violent conflict.

Participants recognized, that in order to make substantial progress towards “equal access to justice for all”, new approaches and additional efforts are required.

In order to move from justice for the few to justice for the many, participants considered it is necessary to:

1. **Put people and their legal needs at the center of justice systems.** Understand what people need and want when they seek justice, which obstacles they face and what kind of justice they receive.
2. **Solve justice problems.** Transform justice institutions and services through a broader range of justice providers, to ensure respect for human rights, to respond to unmet legal needs of billions of people, using high-tech as well as low-tech innovative solutions, based on data, evidence and learning, while taking into account the specificities of the context
3. **Improve the quality of justice journeys.** Empower people to understand, use and shape the law, while offering them fair informal and formal justice processes that meet their needs in terms of both procedures and outcomes.
4. **Use justice for prevention.** Make use of mediation and other methods to prevent disputes from escalating. Address legacies of human rights violations. Invest in justice systems that are trustworthy and legitimate.
5. **Provide people with means to access services and opportunities.** Break down legal, administrative and practical barriers that people face to obtain documents, access public services, and participate fully in society and the economy, while promoting gender equality.

Participants commit to take concrete steps to promote access to justice and to convince others to do the same.

The **Declaration on Equal Access to Justice for All by 2030** was adopted at the Ministerial Roundtable on Access to Justice, hosted by H.E. Sigrid Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and International Cooperation of the Netherlands, in the Peace Palace in The Hague on 7 February 2019.

The meeting was attended by

- the Ministers of Justice or their deputies or the Attorney Generals of the following countries: **Afghanistan, Argentina, Canada, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Indonesia, Libya, the Netherlands, Niger, Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Uganda, and Ukraine.**
- the Ministers of International Cooperation or their deputies from **Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland** and the **United Kingdom**, and;
- high level representatives from: **The Elders, the OECD secretariat, UN DPKO, and IDLO.** The **Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children** also participated.

The meeting was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and was part of the Access to Justice Conference 2019. For more information on the larger series of events, including the third meeting of the Task Force on Justice, the Justice Partners Forum, and the Innovating Justice Forum please see the following link: [www.justice.sdg16.plus](http://www.justice.sdg16.plus)