

Justice Leaders' Summit

Scaling up people-centred justice – 29 April 2021

The Justice Leaders is a group of former Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General working to promote people-centred justice and to support the work of serving justice leaders.

Principles for People-Centred Justice

Building on the ministerial summit on justice for all of 14 April, the [Justice Leaders](#) convened a high-level meeting on 29 April 2021 to propose ambitious and concrete steps to fulfil commitments to deliver people-centred justice.

We acknowledge the leadership taken by Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General, and by the hosts of the meeting: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the g7+ secretariat, The Elders, and the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies.

We endorse the [Hague Declaration](#) and the [Joint Action Plan](#) of the g7+ countries, and strategy proposed by the [Task Force on Justice](#). We fully support the five principles for people-centred justice that were proposed at the ministerial meeting:

- 1. Put people and their justice needs at the centre of justice systems.** Understand what people need and want when they seek justice, and the justice they receive. Make better use of data (including the new indicator SDG16.3.3) to map and understand the context and tailor actions to groups that are more likely to suffer injustice.
- 2. Resolve justice problems.** Transform justice institutions and broaden the range of formal and informal justice actors to provide people with fair, inclusive, relevant, and timely justice solutions that respect human rights. Promote open justice and embrace high-tech as well as low-tech innovations based on data, digitalisation, evidence, and learning.
- 3. Improve justice journeys.** Empower people and communities to understand, use, and shape the law, increase meaningful participation in justice, and provide people-centred justice services that help them achieve fair outcomes.
- 4. Use justice for prevention and to promote reconciliation.** Take measures to reduce violence and de-escalate conflicts and disputes, build trustworthy and legitimate justice systems, prevent recurrence of grave human rights violations, tackle the root causes of injustice, and use the law to reduce risks.

- 5. Empower people to access services and opportunities.** Eliminate legal, administrative, financial, and practical barriers that people face to obtain documents, access public services (including for mental health), and participate fully in society and the economy, while promoting gender equality.

We support the launch of the [Justice Action Coalition](#) as a high-ambition group of countries committed to working together to deliver the SDG targets for justice for all. We are committed to working with members of this coalition and to encourage other countries to join as part of the Decade of Action.

The Justice Leaders' Summit

Our high-level meeting focused on action. We are at a tipping point where a growing number of countries accept that their justice systems are not fit for purpose. Ahead of the pandemic, the Task Force on Justice found that 1.5 billion people have justice problems they cannot solve. The need for justice has since grown due to the health, economic, social, and political consequences of COVID-19.

The justice institutions of the 20th century are incapable of bridging the justice gap and – in too many cases – they exacerbate injustice. This prevents people and economies from reaching their full potential, exacerbates inequality and exclusion, and has a disastrous impact on trust and social cohesion.

As an alternative, a people-centred justice approach is gaining traction. Now is the time to push forward with ambitious, practical, and concrete measures. The Justice Leaders identified **four priorities** as countries accelerate implementation of the SDG targets for justice for all. These priorities build on the five principles and should be prioritized to implement them.

- **Develop platforms to gather and share knowledge of people's justice problems and what works to prevent or solve these problems.**

All countries should gather data on people's experience of injustice, but this requires the standardised surveys and frameworks for sharing data that are common in other sectors. We believe all countries should conduct at least one survey of justice needs within the Decade of Action.

We have growing evidence of what works to prevent and solve justice problems, but this knowledge has not been consolidated and made available to the national justice leaders. The international system should provide a platform for justice solutions, building on models from other fields such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The collection of data and evidence for justice is a global public good and should be made a priority for international finance.

- **Invest in innovative delivery models that can respond to the unmet need for justice of hundreds of millions of people.**

As currently configured, justice systems are unable to provide justice at scale and at a reasonable cost. We need to develop and finance innovative delivery models that are easier for people to understand and access, and that are delivered by a much greater range of justice actors.

Game changing innovations include: (i) online platforms that provide advice, triage problems, and route people to the services they need; (ii) community justice services and dispute resolution mechanisms; (iii) user-friendly contracts and other legal documents; (iv) one-stop dispute resolution mechanisms; (v) problem-solving courts for criminal cases; (vi) services that help people claim their right to access vital public services; and (vii) prevention programmes that tackle violence and fraud.

Partnerships between public, private, and non-governmental sectors are needed to make this happen.

- **Create an enabling environment to take game-changing innovations to scale.**

Justice systems tend to be resistant to change and many are protected by regulatory barriers that make it hard for new actors to provide justice services.

Through the Justice Action Coalition, supported by the United Nations, countries should explore regulatory frameworks that are open to new ideas, approaches, private sector initiatives, and partnerships. As former justice leaders, we are committed to working with serving ministers and attorneys general as they seek to improve the regulatory environment.

Flexible financing mechanisms that bring together public, private, and philanthropic funders are needed to support innovation at scale. The United Nations can foster a dialogue in this area, together with the World Bank and regional financial institutions. Justice systems also need spaces where those that are looking for solutions and those that have them can find each other, develop their ideas, scale, and learn.

- **Build a platform for justice leadership.**

The 2030 Agenda provides a framework for justice leaders to come together to share experiences, co-ordinate, agree on common action, hold each other to account, and plan further action.

The platform for justice leadership should be networked and inclusive. The international system must work as one, drawing on the comparative advantage of the UN system, the Bretton Woods institutions, intergovernmental bodies such as International Development Law Organization, and institutions able to stand up for justice for women, children, refugees, migrants, and groups that experience discrimination and exclusion. UN agencies can do more to build evidence-based programmes aligned to national goals that are based on data about the people's justice needs.

The United Nations and the broader multilateral system play a vital role in setting standards for human rights and in areas such as the independence of judges and lawyers. More robust standards of accountability are needed for the SDG targets for justice for all.

Justice partnerships must be cross-sectoral, bringing together traditional justice actors with those working on health, education, housing, gender, and other areas. Community paralegals must be supported to empower people to solve their justice problems. The private sector can be a partner and innovator that complements and strengthens the formal justice system, especially in the areas of prevention, early interventions, and concerning data. The Justice Action Coalition and the UN could work together to ensure that people centered justice is solidly anchored in the second SDG Summit in 2023.

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