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


**New York, 11 October 2019, 10:00**

Mr Chairperson, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to be with you today to introduce the Secretary-General's annual report on "*Strengthening and coordinating United Nations efforts to promote the rule of law*".

Rule of law at the national and international levels is a pre-requisite for achieving the goals set out in the UN Charter. Without it, we cannot maintain international peace and security; achieve sustainable development; nor enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Rule of law is also fundamental to the social contract between



trust, not fear; and on inclusion, not marginalization. For the most vulnerable communities, including many women, the rule of law – and the norms and institutions that come with it – may be their only pathway to access public services and remedies; to enjoy social protection; and to avoid being victimized by corrupt practices and abuses of power. As such, the rule of law is an essential element of building societies that are resilient in the face of existing and emerging challenges. This, too, is in the interests not only of the most vulnerable but also of those in power.

displacement, and the wider impact on societies, could have largely been averted.

I'd like here to recall the words of the Secretary General in his

where reason and restraint are in short supply even as the problems

we face accumulate and there is wide-ranging impunity, including for violations of international humanitarian law

Yet the people most directly affected by climate change remain horrifyingly vulnerable. They risk losing the very ground beneath their feet, their livelihoods and their childrens' futures. It is the very definition of an existential threat.

Third, the digital age has advanced at a breathtaking speed, rapidly overtaking contemporary notions of the law and governance. In these new virtual worlds, existing legal frameworks, national and international, need to evolve. Rule of law must exist online as it does in the physical world to mitigate the impact of new technologies on

Let me reiterate the Secretary-General's call that the death penalty should no longer have a place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Finally, the challenges I mentioned today are but a few of the strong headwinds currently confronting our efforts at international cooperation. The Secretary-General has reminded us that the anniversary of the United Nations next year is a critical moment to reflect on the importance of and renew our commitment to our common project. The pillars of today's international legal order

*Access to justice for disadvantaged and marginalized groups*

A recent report of the Task Force on Justice estimates that 5 billion

that they lack meaningful access to justice for everyday problems and they remain outside the opportunity the law provides. Many of

developed 18 country reports identifying gaps in protection against violence and gender-based inequalities in civil and criminal legislation.

*Prevention, protection and sustaining peace*

In Mali, ~~part~~ of law support seeks to address the troubling

*UN assistance at the international level*

The Secretary-General's report also includes work to promote the

rule of law at the international level. The General Assembly decided in 2015 to convene an intergovernmental conference to prepare the draft text of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We are encouraged by the progress made. We are also encouraged by steps taken by this Committee to examine issues such as the protection of the atmosphere and sea-level rise in relation to international law. These examples show that UN bodies are responsive to concerns



*Way forward*

Mr Chairperson,

You have a busy General Assembly session ahead of you. The Secretary-General deeply values the contributions of this Committee to advancing the rule of law. Guidance from and action by Member States are critical to ensuring that we successfully confront some of the challenges I outlined above, in the spirit of solidarity and cooperation necessary.

It is also vital to ensuring that we innovate and adapt to rapidly changing circumstances and increasing complexity. We welcomed, for instance, the much-needed guidance adopted by the Security Council in last year's resolution 2447 on our rule of law assistance in crisis and conflict contexts. Next year in Kyoto, many Member States will convene at the 14<sup>th</sup> United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to examine how we can advance

benefit from an international system underpinned by the spirit and institutions of justice for all. The Secretary-General stands ready to do his part to advance towards this goal.