

**Statement on behalf of Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, France,  
Germany, Liberia, Luxembourg, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Portugal,  
Sierra Leone, Sweden, the United States**

**who are members of the Justice Action Coalition**

**High-level debate of the United Nations General Assembly**

**“Equal Access to Justice for All:  
Advancing Reforms for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies”**

**United Nations Headquarters  
New York  
15 June 2023**

- Check against delivery –

## Thank you, Mr. President

I have the honour to speak on behalf of Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Liberia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Sierra Leone, Sweden, the United States and my own country, The Kingdom of the Netherlands who are members of the [Justice Action Coalition](#): a multistakeholder cross-regional coalition championing equal access to justice for all as part of SDG16.

We would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for holding this high-level debate in cooperation with UNODC and other relevant UN agencies.

Our group would like to highlight the following three points at this occasion:

1. Access to justice is a critical enabler of the SDGs and sustainable peace
2. We need a shift to a People centered approach
3. This requires an evidence-based, innovative and whole-of-society effort

## Mr. President,

*To our first point: access to justice is a critical enabler for the SDGs and sustainable peace.*

The absence of justice is reflected in the multiple crises facing us, including increasing conflict, rising economic inequalities, climate change and increased displacement as a result. If we wish to achieve our shared goals under the 2030 Agenda, we must focus on justice with renewed vigour and commitment.

The [Justice For All](#) report produced by our movement shows that globally 5.1 billion people lack meaningful access to justice. We must act to close this ‘global justice gap’ and ensure that we leave no one behind.

This is why the ministers of the Justice Action Coalition launched the [2023 Justice Appeal](#), calling on all justice actors – state and non-state – to come to the SDG Summit in September 2023 with data and evidence to demonstrate their commitment and contributions to closing the global justice gap.

*Secondly: A shift to a people-centered approach is needed to achieve equal access to justice for all.*

This approach to rule of law and justice puts people, in all their diversity, and their needs to access justice at the center of justice systems. We simply cannot address poverty, injustice and inequality without fair and transparent institutions that are responsive to peoples priorities and the full enjoyment of their human rights.

We encourage the UN to take this approach forward in follow-up to Our Common Agenda and especially the renewed vision of the Secretary-General on the Rule of Law.

We also welcome the resolution on equal access to justice for all adopted by consensus at the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice held last month in Vienna and we look forward to working towards its adoption by the General Assembly this fall.

*Thirdly, this requires an evidence-based, innovative and whole-of-society effort.*

The Justice Action Coalition serves as a platform to encourage member states to collect data, disaggregated by relevant intersectional identity factors where possible, and to use it to inform justice systems and policies.

For example, globally, 12 million people are in prison, with over 3 million unsentenced detainees.

Recent [research](#) indicates that paralegals could provide a mechanism to substantially reduce the proportion of unsentenced prisoners at a relatively low cost and with huge cost-saving potential.

Some persons, including women, children, youth, those living with disabilities or without legal identities are proven more likely to suffer injustice than others. We therefore promote equal access to justice with particular attention to women and persons in situations of vulnerability or marginalisation.

A holistic approach, through the promotion and the availability of innovative services will help to connect justice services to healthcare including mental health and psychosocial support as well as shelters. Within the context of criminal justice, these services are essential to help protect, assist and support victims of crime.

In closing,

We cannot stress enough the role of people-centered justice in ensuring equal access to justice for all and ensuring more peaceful, just and inclusive societies. We look to the United Nations as an essential partner in this effort.

**I thank you, Mr. President.**