

**Statement on behalf of Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Germany,
Indonesia, Liberia, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal, São Tomé and
Príncipe, Sierra Leone and Sweden**

who are members of the Justice Action Coalition

at the

**SDG 16 High Level Conference on
“Peace, justice and inclusive societies for Sustainable Development”**

**New York City
06 May 2024**

Thank you, Chair,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Indonesia, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Sweden and my own country Liberia.

We represent the **Justice Action Coalition**, a multistakeholder cross-regional coalition championing equal access to justice for all as part of SDG16. The Justice Action Coalition believes that access to justice is best understood as the ability of people to resolve and prevent their justice problems, and to use justice as a platform, which enables them to participate in their economies and societies.

Mr. /Madam. Chair, this year, we are collectively reviewing SDG16 and negotiating a Pact for the Future. And yet, despite being past the midway point of the 2030 deadline, we remain far off-track to achieve Goal 16. In fact, we find ourselves in the midst of intersecting and compounding challenges. Challenges, which can only be solved through a concerted and collaborative approach.

This year's SDG 16 High Level Conference, followed by the High-Level Political Forum and the Summit of the Future present unique opportunities for us to reimagine a peaceful, just and inclusive future. A future where people and their needs, are placed firmly at the center of justice systems, policies and services.

To this end, we must:

1. **Harness the multiplier effect of justice** to achieve the SDGs,
2. **Invest in people-centered justice** for realizing peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, and
3. **Ensure** that we *Leave no One Behind* by taking a people-centered approach to justice.

Mr. /Madam. Chair,

With just seven years left to achieve the 2030 sustainable development agenda, we are left with no choice but to think and act exponentially. Justice is, by now, well recognized as a critical enabler for achieving other SDGs.

When justice is absent, injustice prevails. And, **Mr./Madam Chair**, injustices come at a great cost. It is costly for the individual, through the loss of income arising directly from an injustice or indirectly through the expensive and often time-consuming process of seeking redress, or both. Injustice is also costly on the macro level through the increased risk of conflict, and the adverse effects on education and healthcare, amongst others. It also weakens public trust and reduces GDP.

People-centered justice can increase the levels of trust between people and institutions, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of governments. By increasing participation and inclusivity, people-centered justice can strengthen democratic institutions. It can mitigate the threat of authoritarianism and conflict, thus enabling peace. Even in contexts where human rights conversations are difficult, it

opens up the space to create platforms for human rights engagement by focusing on fair outcomes for all people.

Second, we must invest effectively in equal access to justice for all.

We are in the midst of intersecting crises. Countries across the world are facing resource crunch. We need innovative and effective ways of achieving the 2030 agenda.

People-centered justice ensures effective deployment of resources into justice solutions that work, are scalable and sustainable. By taking a data-driven and evidence-based approach, people-centered justice pushes justice actors to think beyond the traditional approach to rule of law and justice, which is often focused on processes. Its focus on fair outcomes for people strengthens trust between people and the state. Its emphasis on cross-sectoral approaches where justice actors work with health, employment, immigration, education, climate and other formal and informal actors to prevent and resolve people's justice problems is critical for achieving the SDGs within our limited resources.

We must, therefore, act urgently and decisively to invest in this approach to accelerate the attainment of the 2030 Agenda.

Last but not least,

To truly achieve **equal** access to justice **for all** by 2030, we need to proactively reach those most at risk of being left behind. Mr./Madam Chair, justice needs are not randomly distributed. The world over, there are groups of people that are at increased risk of suffering injustices and their impact, or require specific support in their justice journeys. Illustratively, evidence from a recent report by the World Justice Project indicates that *"Women are less likely to resolve their legal problems and more likely to face hardships."* Similarly, *"in 70% of the countries [surveyed], people living in poverty experience more legal problems than those who are not living in poverty."* Therefore, we must reach the furthest behind first.

By taking a data driven approach, people-centered justice helps us in identifying those most at risk of being left behind and understanding their experiences of seeking justice. Its evidence-based approach provides innovative and scalable solutions such as empowering people, simplifying legal and administrative processes, providing community services and partnering with multiple stakeholders across formal and informal systems.

In closing, **Mr. /Mdme. Chair,**

Throughout the first half of the development agenda, these principles of putting people at the center of justice systems, policies and services have been well articulated. They have now been endorsed by over 60 countries.

Now, in this second half of the development agenda, building off the momentum of this SDG 16 High Level Conference, we have the unique opportunity to put these principles to practice. This is critical to harness their potential and to achieve equal access to justice for all by 2030!

Thank you.