



At the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at National and International Levels, that is taking place during the 67th UN General Assembly, world leaders will focus on strengthening the rule of law, underlining its central role in securing international peace and security, furthering development and the achievement of universal human rights. This first high-level meeting of the General Assembly dedicated solely to the rule of law, will bring together governments and civil society to review progress made and challenges that exist at the national and international level to strengthen the rule of law.

On 24th September, on the occasion of the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law, the Governments of Finland and South Africa, along with UN Women, will host a high level event focusing on women's access to justice. The Presidents of Finland, Mr. Sauli Niinistö and South Africa Mr. Jacob Zuma and Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Michelle Bachelet, will co-host the event. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon will give the opening remarks.

Today, the rule of law often rules women out. Obstacles persist that prevent women from accessing legal protection for their rights, resulting in discrimination and inequality that hamper women's ability to live free of violence and to contribute as full and equal citizens. These obstacles can be overcome through dedicated action by all. Ahead of the meeting, UN Women, Governments of Finland and South Africa are calling on governments to show strong commitment, and accelerate actions and policies to increase women's access to justice and foster a responsive justice system that advances women's equal rights.

Steps urgently needed include the repealing of all discriminatory legislation, greater participation of women in the justice sector and innovative institutional reforms that are responsive to women's specific needs. Furthermore, an engagement with informal justice that promotes women's equality and rights, and a focus on establishing women's right to justice following conflict through transitional justice and particularly reparations programmes are needed.

Globally, 139 constitutions include guarantees of gender equality, 125 countries outlaw

domestic violence, 117 countries have equal pay laws and outlaw sexual harassment at work. Women have equal right to own property in 115 countries and in 93 have equal inheritance rights. Yet the implementation of these laws continues to lag behind.

“It is estimated that 80 per cent of the world’s women have little or no access to their country’s formal justice system. They cannot wait any longer. They are demanding justice now. The rule of law must guarantee women’s equal rights, equal opportunity and equal participation, and prosecute criminals for violations of women’s rights,” said Michelle Bachelet, UN Women Executive Director.

The President of Finland, Mr Sauli Niinistö reminds that empowering women to know their rights and support the government’s capacity to respond with enhanced services is not just an ethical question, but also a practical one: “Can we afford not to use today the full potential of the world’s women and girls?”.

The challenges faced by millions of women across the world are not abstract. They are real and require our urgent attention. While much progress has been made, there remain many challenges to be addressed. The President of South Africa, Mr Jacob Zuma, urged leaders to recommit to addressing the plight faced by women all over the world. To this end, he stressed “the need to take concrete steps to make real the promise of a better world, free of violence, poverty and discrimination, for all women”.

At the event, governments will be invited to make [concrete commitments](#) to policy actions and highlight initiatives to advance women’s access to justice, including in the areas of legal reform, women’s participation in all levels of the justice chain, and specific measures to seek redress for conflict-related crimes.

The high-level event will be held of 24th September, at The Ambassador’s Riverview, UN Headquarters, New York. The event will be webcast live at www.unwomen.org

□ **Additional links:**

- UN Women ([website](#))

- Two In-Focus highlights: [UN Women at the GA](#) ; and Strengthening [women's access to Justice](#) . Both sections have been created to bring under one banner, all the press materials, social media outreach, GA Official reports, photos and videos, background papers, event details, etc. A third in-focus on rural women's economic empowerment will be added on Tuesday.

- Interesting to Follow/ Share: the conversation on the rule of law and women's access to justice, using the hashtag [#GenderJustice](#) on Twitter and connecting with UN Women on [Facebook](#) ; the interlinkages on women's access to justice and ending violence against women highlighted on UN Women's [advocacy platform Say No to Violence](#) ; use and spread the information on all UN gender-related news, aggregated at [WomenWatch](#)

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