

**2025 United Nations High-Level Political Forum
Justice Action Coalition Statement
High Level Segment General Debate**

Thank you, Chair.

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Justice Action Coalition, a multi-stakeholder, cross-regional group committed to advancing equal access to justice for All under SDG 16.3 and beyond.

Over the past four years, the Justice Action Coalition has worked collaboratively to achieve measurable progress in justice outcomes for people and communities by advancing Sustainable Development Goal 16.3, focusing on the rule of law and equal access to justice for all. Central to the Coalition's mission is the promotion of people-centered justice as a transformative approach to delivering sustainable peace and development.

Evidence and experience show that the economic cost of not investing in justice, estimated at up to 3% of GDP, is often far greater than the cost of delivering it. In many lower-income countries, a universal, people-centered justice system can be provided for as little as \$34 per person per year.

Unresolved legal problems drive poverty and inequality, spark unrest, erode trust in institutions, and undermine social cohesion. When people can't resolve everyday justice issues, they lose income, lose faith in the system, and, in some contexts, take to the streets.

The aim of people-centered justice is not only to resolve justice problems but also to prevent them from occurring. If we fail to deliver justice, we are forced to spend much more time and resources responding to its consequences rather than reaping its benefits.

We need a systemic approach that centers human rights and anticipates risks before they escalate.

This includes meeting people where they are. A people-centered and human rights-based approach to justice is grounded in evidence about the most common justice problems people encounter and the solutions afforded to effectively address them. It focuses on how individuals experience justice processes to improve the "*justice journeys*" they navigate. This approach requires justice institutions to collaborate with a wide range of actors, including those beyond the formal justice sector or the justice sector at all.

But to truly deliver justice and overcome the global gap of 5.1 billion people without equal access to justice, we must address the inequities that persist. Indeed, we must be frank about the deep inequalities in access to justice, including for women and children and persons with disabilities.

Globally, gender inequality is limiting women's ability to resolve legal problems, leading to negative outcomes, including violence, financial hardship, and discrimination. Additionally, children and adolescents continue to be systematically excluded from the benefits of justice, facing systems designed without children in mind, fragmented services, late responses, and reduced youth participation in decision-making processes that affect them. It is imperative to highlight the increased risks experienced by women and children involved in the same case, especially in situations of violence within family contexts, resulting in compounded justice problems.

Thus, justice systems must be built with services that are safe, affordable, and designed with women's and children's needs in mind. Structural transformation of justice systems must include institutional redesign from a people-centered perspective; violence and re-victimization prevention strategies; community empowerment initiatives; strengthening of procedural safeguards and resources; intersectoral coordination; and, more importantly, justice systems must include the use of data and evidence for decision-making.

We must also recognize the hindered access to justice experienced by persons with disabilities. This amounts to about 16% of the world's population being continuously left behind. We call for people-centered justice systems that will ensure accommodations, accessible communication formats, legal aid, and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, to reduce obstacles and advance individual rights and social inclusion

Chair,

Delivering on the promise to *Leave No One Behind* means using justice as the key to achieving equal, inclusive, and sustainable development. It means ensuring that those most often excluded, including women and children, can access justice when they need it and how they need it.

To achieve this, we must move from rhetoric to investment. Investing in justice is investing in prevention, in peace, and in the resilience of our societies. It is a smart, cost-effective investment with long-term returns, both human and economic.

Chair, as members of the Justice Action Coalition, we call on all partners to prioritize equal access to justice for All. Because without justice at the core, the promise to leave no one behind remains hollow. Let us commit, today and every day, to ensuring justice is not an afterthought, but a foundation.

Thank you.