

JG Remarks for the Launch of the Pathfinders Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies

September 21 1:15-230pm

UNHQ Room 12

Excellencies, distinguished guests and friends:

[[Thank you to the Governments of Brazil, Sierra Leone, and Switzerland and to NYU's Center for International Cooperation for their leadership in convening us here today.]]

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals two years ago represented an important achievement. But as we know, the SDGs are not in themselves a plan or a strategy: they're a statement of ambition which will be achieved only through persistent and sustained commitment.

That is why I welcome the work of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. There is a critical need to translate Goal 16's targets into concrete, tangible results. And that's just what the Pathfinders Initiative is designed to accomplish.

The Open Society Justice Initiative is particularly pleased that the Roadmap identifies guaranteeing access to justice for all as one of its three "grand challenges". At Open Society we support a diverse array of partners to broaden access to justice through the tool of legal empowerment. Let me share three initiatives - in community justice, measurement, and financing.

First, we have launched a 10-country effort to scale community-based justice services to a sustainable, national level. This program responds to the aspiration of SDG 16.3 to extend the reach of legal tools to address everyday problems. Its aim is to foster more responsive and inclusive ways for the poor and marginalized to enforce their rights under the law. Its method is to develop and strengthen models of legal assistance involving both lawyers and non-lawyers. [[[We are pleased to be collaborating with governments and civil society in several Pathfinder countries represented here today, including Sierra Leone and Indonesia.]]]

Second, measures of access to justice must be strengthened. The two global indicators for 16.3 focus exclusively on aspects of the *criminal* justice system. On their own, these measures fail to capture the most frequent justice needs people face - consumer complaints, employment disputes, land and property issues, family matters, debt. Together with others, we at Open Society are refining more effective measures for unmet legal needs. These will be critical in understanding progress and focusing resources where they matter most.

Finally, we must collectively address the funding crisis confronting independent legal empowerment organizations. Many of the themes incorporated into the SDGs were accompanied by significant financial commitments on the part of governments and development partners—on nutrition, health care, and education. We haven't yet seen the same level of urgency given to access to justice, though the funding imperative is no less urgent. In recent years, we have helped develop and test different financing solutions. But more is required if access to justice is to fulfill its promise as an enabler of accountable government, effective public services, and inclusive development. We're encouraged by the Roadmap's aim to mobilize creative sources of financing and we're hopeful that frontline legal advocates receive the support they merit.

In sum, we welcome the Roadmap, we applaud its ambition and we look forward to working with the Pathfinders in rising to address its grand challenges.