

## Putting People at the Center of Justice

The ripple effects of the pandemic and the generalized uncertainty about the economy, democracy, and the planet are undermining trust between people, communities and the state. With trust in institutions decreasing and global outlooks uncertain, societal tensions are on the rise. Around the world, the social contract is in peril.

In his report Our Common Agenda, the UN Secretary General, has called building trust our defining challenge and points to the growing disconnect between people and the institutions that serve them. Wherever there are tensions, disputes, and conflicts, justice actors have a role to play. If they put people at the center, they can reestablish trust and help pave the way for recovery.

Delivering access to justice for all by 2030 is the goal set by SDG16. Yet, justice systems in countries of all income levels are delivering for the few, not for all. As the Justice for All report highlighted, 1.5 billion people are unable to resolve their justice problems. That means that conflicts fester, injustices are stomached instead of addressed, and basic fairness in everyday life is out of reach for many.

Failing justice systems exacerbate grievances in the short term and contribute to instability in the long term. When grievances and injustices persist and relationships deteriorate, violence may catalyze into broader conflict. This is even more pressing in conflict affected countries, where the inability of



people to quickly and fairly resolve their justice problems, directly affects peace efforts and stability. The effective prevention of violence, conflict, and human rights violations are essential for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world.

To strengthen the bonds that hold our societies together and reestablish trust between people and communities, and governments, we need to transform justice systems, by putting people in the center. This transformation needs to be grounded in empirical data on individual and structural injustices. We must increase our understanding of what the most common justice problems are, who faces them, what impact they have and what works to resolve them. Justice is essential to reducing barriers for underserved, marginalized and disproportionately affected communities.

The last four years we have seen a remarkable mobilization around the need to provide equal access to justice for all, sparked by the adoption of SDG16. The movement for people-centered justice has brought together people from all over the world representing governments, international organizations, professional or technical organizations, civil society and the private sector.

At the same time, there is an urgent need for increased collaboration at the national, regional, and the international level. To enhance collaboration on people-centered approaches in justice systems, a diverse group of countries came together in April 2021 and agreed to form a Justice Action Coalition, showing political leadership on finding solutions to the justice challenges we are facing today and tomorrow.

This joint action plan sets out how the members of the Justice Action Coalition will collaborate between now and the SDG Summit of 2023, in order to demonstrate measurable progress towards providing equal access to justice for all.

## Justice Action Coalition

The Justice Action Coalition is a network of countries and partners who are allies in championing equal access to justice for all. The guiding ambition of the Justice Action Coalition is to close the global justice gap and the goal is to achieve measurable progress in justice outcomes for people and communities by the second SDG Summit in 2023.

To pursue these outcomes, the Justice Action Coalition has identified international and national priorities for its work and will set up workstreams to develop a set of joint deliverables.



## International priorities

The Justice Action Coalition will enable its members to find allies across the world, with whom they can join forces to promote people-centered justice in different regional and international events, strategies, and policy processes. The work builds on the Justice for All report and the movement for people-centered justice that was forged by the Task Force on Justice and its many partners.

Through the Justice Action Coalition, like-minded countries and organizations will raise the ambition on SDG16 and commit to transform justice systems by putting people in the center. Depending on the context and activity, members can form smaller and ad hoc coalitions to achieve specific political and policy goals at the international level.

Ahead of the second SDG Summit in 2023, the Justice Action Coalition and its members will:



Use international events and processes to change strategies and policies on the rule of law and speak up jointly for the need to provide access to justice for all.



Mobilize and campaign for political and financial support to people-centered justice, including through more coherent and effective joint international support to transform justice systems in conflict-affected and fragile countries.



Coordinate and exchange information, knowledge, data and evidence of what works to resolve and prevent people's justice problems.



Identify and mobilize other likeminded countries to join the Justice Action Coalition and increase global collaboration on people-centered justice.

This will be done through developing joint statements or aligning interventions to international fora and global or regional decision-making processes. Coalition members may also come together to organize (side) events around new data and evidence, with the goal to shape narratives, policies and strategies at the global and regional level.

## International processes where coalition members can engage in the short term are:

1

### The US Summit for Democracy, December 2021 – March 2023

*For example, some members could submit a commitment on people-centered justice. During the year, some members could make a joint commitment to convene the Justice Action Coalition at the ministerial level in June 2022, in conjunction with the World Justice Forum in The Hague, as part of the Democracy Summit's Year of Action.*

2

### UN Human Rights Council, January 2022 – December 2024

*For example, some countries could work together to discuss the transformation of justice systems that is required for a social contract grounded in human rights, supporting Luxembourg's membership of the Council.*

3

### The g7+ Joint Action Plan on Access to Justice for all in Conflict Affected-Countries

*For example, some g7+ countries could collaborate to strengthen national access to justice strategies, consistent with the priorities identified in the Joint Action Plan and supported by other members of the Justice Action Coalition.*

4

### The Peacebuilding Commission

*For example, some countries could organize a strategy meeting on ensuring access to justice for all as part of support to peace efforts in conflict affected countries.*

5

### The European Union

*For example, in the Eastern Partnership and in the Sahel region coalition members can work together to develop more people-centered approaches.*

6

### World Justice Forum

*For example, members can take part in the World Justice Forum and promote the messages from the ministerial level of the Justice Action Coalition in the end of May/beginning of June 2022.*

The justice team at Pathfinders is available to help prepare drafts for statements or short policy papers on relevant topics and can support the organization of convenings and collaborations. It will also monitor and update a Justice Calendar with regional and international events, strategies, and policy processes. See the annex for a first iteration of such a calendar.

# International priorities

At the national and local level, members of the Justice Action Coalition will initiate and/or continue implementing people-centered justice initiatives, policies, and programming. As allies in the coalition, members will share domestic experiences, exchange lessons learned, and coordinate on national justice programs. The coalition serves as a platform for peer-to-peer learning and exchange. An initial list of national and domestic experiences that could form the basis for peer-to-peer exchange or joint action include:

International Priorities	
	<b>Canada</b> Publication of the nationwide legal needs survey, followed by qualitative studies on legal problems for marginalized communities (early 2022)  New National Action Plan for Open Government Partnership (end of 2021)  Third National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security (fall 2022)
	<b>Germany</b> Peace and Social Cohesion Strategy (2022)
	<b>Luxembourg</b> Reform of the Juvenile justice system, with more emphasis on preventive and restorative justice  Strengthening the protection of whistleblowers, journalists and media freedom.
	<b>São Tomé and Príncipe</b> Decentralization and digitalization of the justice system, e.g. the creation of a database  Developing a justice conversation project to provide free legal consultation and bring justice to the people
	<b>Sierra Leone</b> Technical working group on SDG16 reporting. Creation of evaluation framework for reporting on SDG16, bringing justice and security institutions together  Child rights legislation and criminal procedure reform  Implementation of Universal Periodic Review recommendations
	<b>Solomon Islands</b> Project addressing pre-trial detention  Access to justice program in which community legal advocates and paralegals reach out to rural communities and provide legal information and awareness
	<b>Sweden</b> Drive for Democracy, in development, foreign and trade policy
	<b>USAID</b> New Rule of Law strategy embracing people-centered justice is under development  Implementation of first wave of people-centered justice programs in Kosovo, Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan. Aiming to create a feedback loop for early learning  Implementation of Universal Periodic Review recommendations

The justice team at Pathfinders will keep track of national priorities that countries have reported and will actively seek to promote collaboration among countries or with partner organizations. It will connect countries to experts, organizations (like the OGP network), publications or relevant events, and can support the organization of virtual exchanges.

### 2023 Justice Data Graphical Report

*WJP*

*The graphical report will draw global and local data points to present the status of access to justice around the world.*

### Access to Justice SDG16.3.3 Report

*OECD and Pathfinders*

*The SDG 16.3.3 Report will present data on the official SDG indicator to measure progress towards target 16.3 of providing equal access to justice for all.*

### Regional Progress Report for Ibero-America

*Ibero-American Alliance for Access to Justice*

*The Ibero-American Progress Report will bring together data and evidence, as available, to present a snapshot on the state of access to justice in the region.*

### Working Group on Transitional Justice

*ICTJ (lead) and others*

*The report will present evidence on innovative practices to close the justice gap in countries affected by conflict and mass human rights violations and demonstrate the value of transitional justice to SDG16+.*

### Customary and Informal Justice

*Working Group on Customary and Informal Justice*

*The report will compile evidence on how customary and informal justice contributes to the achievement of access to justice for all.*

### Menu of Gamechangers

*HiiL*

*The Menu of Game-changers will include evidence and analysis on game-changing innovations that work to increase access to justice.*

### Financing Justice for Women

*UN Women, IDLO (leads) and others*

*The study will focus on gender responsive justice financing, and the extent to which national budgets reflect women's justice needs.*

### Young Justice Leaders

*Pathfinders*

*Young Justice Leaders will focus on the SDG Summit in 2023, as a space to engage and contribute to international dialogue and research on justice for all.*

### Justice for Children

*University of Strathclyde, Terre des hommes (leads) and others*

*A series of Justice for Children Briefings will harness global learnings and reinforce child and youth participation to inform policy and support national governments to achieve Justice for Children.*

### Key Messages on People-Centred Justice

*UNDP, Pathfinders (leads) and others*

*Sets of key messages, targeting different audiences, will ground and align the work of the Justice Action Coalition and strengthen the common understanding of people-centered justice.*

# Ways of working

The Justice Action Coalition is multi-stakeholder, high-ambition coalition of countries and organizations and operates as a docking station for workstreams, campaigns and partnerships that contribute to the overall goal of closing the justice gap.

The coalition works in the following way:

## Flexible and ad hoc collaboration

*Depending on the context and activity, countries can form smaller coalitions within the Justice Action Coalition.*

## Informal procedures and interactions

*Coalition members connect on an organic and informal basis.*

## Evidence-based

*The coalition and its members base their work on data and the exchange of knowledge, practices and lessons learned.*

The Justice Action Coalition strives to act as a platform for inspiration and action, based on inclusion and diversity, to bring together different voices, perspectives, and technical expertise to the table. As members are connected in an organic way, the Coalition and its members will seek to expand the movement for people-centered justice.

## Building the Justice Action Coalition

The justice team at the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies serves as the facilitator, accelerator, convener and secretariat of the Justice Action Coalition. The justice team will start by developing a number of tools to facilitate the work:



**Justice Calendar:** engagement of coalition members in events and (policy) processes. Through the calendar, coalition members can identify opportunities to engage with others.



**Keeping track** of national priorities and maintaining regular contact with the members.



Create an overview with all **points of contacts** for the Justice Action Coalition to promote easy engagement among the members.



Create a **mailing list** for regular updates and set up a WhatsApp group for information sharing.

Visit page [justice.sdg16.plus/events](https://justice.sdg16.plus/events) for a list of upcoming justice events.