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Rule of Law in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

The Loyola University Chicago (LUC) School of Law's Program in Rule of Law for Development will convene a conference on Rule of Law in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda to be held at Loyola's Rome, Italy campus on 1-2 February 2019. The conference is being co-sponsored by the American Society of International Law.

Rule of law has become a central element of today's international development agenda. In the Outcome Document for the 2005 United Nations World Summit, member states voiced their recognition of "the need for universal adherence to and implementation of the rule of law at both the national and international levels." Further, in the 2012 Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels, the UN General Assembly reaffirmed "that human rights, the rule of law and democracy are interlinked and mutually reinforcing and that they belong to the universal and indivisible core values and principles of the United Nations."

In the following years, rule of law has taken on an increasingly central role in the United Nations with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) making rule of law a clear priority. The 2030 Agenda "recognizes the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions."

Rule of law runs throughout all of the SDGs. It is most explicit in SDG 16, which seeks to achieve "peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." SDG Target 16.3 explicitly seeks to achieve rule of law at the national and international levels, while other targets under SDG 16 embody other core elements of rule of law.

Beyond SDG 16, other SDGs involving respect for human rights, including the rights of children, disabled persons, and women, also entail critical aspects of rule of law. Likewise, implementation of key international conventions—from the Convention on the Law of the Sea to the Framework Convention on Climate Change—are referenced explicitly in the SDGs while other treaties are implicitly included. National

development priorities with significant legal components such as land tenure and well-regulated enabling environments for economic development are also recognized.

Taken together the framework for implementation of the 2030 Agenda represents a potentially important contribution to achieving improvements in rule of law globally. Following the third year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, we have an opportunity to reflect on experience to date, identify shortcomings, and recognize successes that may be replicated or scaled.

The timing of this conference coincides with mounting evidence of threats to rule of law at the international and domestic levels. Recent scholarship has exposed the seriousness of the risks in countries previously viewed as models of rule of law and democracy. As these authors have noted, the rule of law and democracy are under attack in many countries. In addition, aversion towards multilateral institutions and unilateralist foreign policy agendas in multiple countries threaten to disrupt the rules based international order. In this context, while the SDGs are at risk of potential attack, they may also serve to bolster rule of law at the international and national levels.

The organizers hope that the outcomes of the conference may inform the planned seventh UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) which will take place under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July 2019. The theme of the HLPF will be 'Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality' and will take stock of actions to support a number of relevant SDGs including SDG 16. Key findings from the conference will be transmitted to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs to inform the HLPF meetings and Global Sustainable Development Report.

In keeping with the LUC's mission to create dialogue between scholars and practitioners, the conference will include contributions from persons in academia, international development agencies, national governments, and civil society organizations. The program will focus on the rule of law aspects of SDGs across the following themes:

- Post-conflict recovery and peacekeeping
- Environment
- Human rights
- Transnational crime
- Rural and agricultural development
- Business support for rule of law
- Legal empowerment
- Global partnership for sustainable development (SDG 17)
- Cross-cutting themes supporting efforts to strengthen the rule of law across multiple SDG targets.

Abstract and paper submission

Paper abstracts should be between 300-500 words and submitted by 7 December 2018. The organizers will inform persons submitting abstracts of the decisions by 14 December. Final papers should be submitted by 28 January 2019.

Abstracts and requests for additional information may be sent to Thomas McInerney, Professor of Rule of Law for Development at tmcinerney@luc.edu and Vanessa Caruso, vcarus@luc.edu.

Outcomes and logistics

The organizers will prepare a summary of the conference and key recommendations that will be made public following the event. A webpage will be created to make papers and presentations available.

The Conference will take place at the John Felice Rome Center (JFRC), Loyola University Chicago's campus in Italy.

Please note that, as financial means are limited, the organizers are able to provide financial assistance only to a limited extent. These resources will be specifically directed at young professionals otherwise lacking the financial resources to participate in international conferences. Please contact the organizers to discuss what options are available.