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Migiro stresses importance of UN's work to advance rule of law worldwide



Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro

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The Deputy Secretary-General today stressed the importance of United Nations engagement in advancing the rule of law, a vital endeavour as highlighted by the popular movements for greater accountability and transparency seen in several countries this year.

In an address to the General's Assembly committee which deals with legal matters, also known as the Sixth Committee, Asha-Rose Migiro noted the common desire among people around the world for a government based on the rule of law.

“Events this year, especially in Northern Africa and the Middle East, are a reminder of the universality of the quest for ‘a government of laws and not of men’,” she stated.

“People are making increasing claims on their governments for greater transparency, justice and human rights under the banner of the rule of law,” she added. “Newly constituted governments are looking to the United Nations for assistance in drafting constitutions, reforming justice and security institutions and dealing with legacies of past atrocities.”

Ms. Migiro said the long-standing engagement of the Sixth Committee has been crucial to maintaining international attention on the rule of law at the national and international levels.

“With the support of this committee, the United Nations continues to refine both its understanding of the rule of law and the assistance we provide to Member States,” she said.

The committee is examining the annual report of the Secretary-General on strengthening and coordinating UN rule of law activities, which provides an overview of the extensive efforts undertaken by the Organization.

“Our engagement at the international level is rooted in the recognition that an effective multilateral system in accordance with international law is essential to addressing global challenges and threats,” said the Deputy Secretary-General.

Among the UN’s activities, it is striving to strengthen the system of international criminal justice established by the Rome Statute, which set up the International Criminal Court (ICC).

It is also putting together a “coherent approach” to assisting Member States in fulfilling their primary responsibility to investigate and try perpetrators of serious international crimes, with assistance ranging from supporting complex investigation techniques to developing witness protection agencies.

In addition, the UN continues to support a variety of transitional justice mechanisms. This year alone, Commissions of Inquiry have been mandated in Libya, Côte d’Ivoire and Syria.

The UN is currently providing rule of law assistance in over 150 Member States. These activities take place in all contexts, including development, fragility, conflict and peacebuilding, including in 17 peace operations with rule of law mandates, noted Ms. Migiro.

Three or more UN entities engage in rule of law activities in at least 70 countries, and five or more entities in over 35 countries.

“The principle that all individuals and entities – including States – are accountable to the law drives our efforts,” she told delegates.

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