

Time for UN system to come together to promote rule of law activities – Deputy Secretary-General



Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

8 November 2012 – Now is the time to come together and promote the work of the United Nations for the rule of law, Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson said today, noting the different comparative advantages within the world body that complement one another and can be used to achieve this goal.

“If we work together, we can be an effective force in strengthening the rule of law. If we forge a common approach, we can build solid foundations for peace and security in post-conflict States,” he said in a presentation, delivered at UN Headquarters in New York, to the UN System Chief

Executives Board, which brings together the heads of UN organizations with the aim of enhancing cooperation and coordination amongst them.

Mr. Eliasson said that to strengthen the work of the UN, it is necessary to “break down the walls” between its activities in the three pillars of peace, development and human rights, and adopt a holistic and integrated approach. “The rule of law can help us solve concrete problems, cutting across all three pillars of our work,” he noted.

The UN is currently assisting 150 Member States on various aspects of the rule of law, ranging from advice and assistance in constitution-making processes to reforming justice and security institutions and dealing with legacies of atrocities.

The need for an integrated approach, said Mr. Eliasson, can be seen in conflict-torn countries, where functioning institutions and transitional justice help stabilize security.

“By prosecuting perpetrators, we begin the process of healing. By facilitating truth and reconciliation, we allow communities to re-unite,” he said. “By fostering reparations and restitution, we plant the seeds of economic growth and empowerment.

The rule of law is more than laws and courts, he stated, noting that it is about helping countries to develop norms, social practices and institutions which prevent the arbitrary exercise of political power.

“It is about empowering people by providing access to public services, and by strengthening mechanisms to enforce their basic rights,” said the Deputy Secretary-General.

“Working to strengthen the rule of law creates the foundations for growth opportunity and equity,” he added. “Ultimately, this helps create better conditions for our broader work for the UN.”

He noted that, within the UN, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) will now form joint global focal points for the police, justice and corrections areas in post-conflict and other crisis situations. This will help provide integrated headquarters responses to requests for support from the field.

Also, the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group, the group of executive heads which the Deputy Secretary-General chairs, will act as the strategic body on these matters, ensuring that the rule of law is mainstreamed across the UN. The Group may now expand to include other members of the UN family active in the field of the rule of law.

Mr. Eliasson also pointed out that the rule of law has an important bearing on economic development, on labour protection, on the delivery of public services, on land and property rights, all of which are central to sustainable development.

“We therefore have to see how we integrate the rule of law into the post-2015 development agenda, either through a specific target or goal, or through a set of indicators attached to other targets or goals,” he stated.

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