

# Global Dialogue of Justice Leaders

## Justice for All in a Global Emergency

20th October 2020



*The pandemic, its economic and financial impacts, and the socio-political dislocation that we are now witnessing, form the biggest challenge that justice systems around the world have ever faced.*

***That is why justice leaders must come together.***

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented global emergency. The public health crisis is the worst since influenza killed 50 million people in the wake of World War I and the economic downturn is the most threatening since the 1930s. The pandemic exposes inequalities, exacerbates existing injustices, and contributes to a wave of protest and unrest in a growing number of countries.

Justice systems and justice workers are on the frontline of the response to the pandemic, asked to design, implement, and enforce restrictions on the freedom of movement and of association that aim to prevent the spread of infections. Lockdowns and other emergency measures create new risks of discrimination and abuse and can be used to close legitimate channels for public protest, can limit the right to information, and can complicate judicial and legislative oversight.

The pandemic will also increase demand for justice. The OECD Economic Outlook projects that global GDP will decline by 4.5% this year. This will lead to a wave of layoffs, bankruptcies, debt, evictions, land loss, and disputes between businesses and consumers. The lockdown has increased domestic violence and is triggering a spike in divorces and other family disputes.

Finally, the pandemic has laid bare the disparate impact of the coronavirus on vulnerable groups and a wave of protests has resulted in growing recognition of the need to address remaining systemic discrimination. The persisting inequalities across the globe call for action by governments, including justice actors, to advance greater transparency and participation, and strengthened accountability for justice outcomes.

Just as health leaders are working together to scale up testing, seek new treatments, and develop a vaccine, there is an important opportunity for justice leaders to work together to transform justice systems so that they can respond to the changing needs of people, communities, and societies, while ending the abuses that risk destabilizing societies and creating mechanisms for grievance redress.



*The Global Dialogue of Justice Leaders will provide a platform for people-centered justice and for putting justice institutions and actors at the service of communities and societies during this complex emergency. It will aim to support countries' efforts to implement Sustainable Development Goal 16 to ensure equal access to justice for all.*

## Global Dialogue

The Global Dialogue of Justice Leaders will be hosted by the Government of Canada, alongside partners OECD, the Open Government Partnership and the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies.

It will build on the growing movement for people-centered justice that gained momentum with the adoption of the [OECD Riga Statement](#), the [Hague Declaration](#), the [Buenos Aires Declaration](#) and the [Joint Action Plan of the G7+](#), a ministerial roundtable at the OGP Global Summit in Ottawa, and the launch of the [Justice for All report](#).

The Global Dialogue will bring together ministers of Justice and other justice leaders from all regions and income groups to explore how justice systems can:

- Support a transparent, inclusive, effective and fair response to the public health emergency and sustain this through the course of the pandemic that will continue to threaten societies until a vaccine is developed, tested, and distributed to billions of people.
- Prevent and respond to the new wave of criminal, civil, and administrative justice problems that is building, while acting as a platform for people and communities to participate fully in renewal and recovery.
- Respect people's rights, end abuses of marginalized and disadvantaged groups, and serve communities in ways that increase trust, promote social cohesion, and enable societies to work together during this emergency.
- Use principles of openness and accountability to strengthen the justice sector, particularly its ability to empower people and communities to remedy the injustices that affect their lives, offer people-centered justice services, and provide fair outcomes.

## Global Week for Justice

The Global Dialogue of Justice Leaders will launch the Global Week for Justice, held from 19-24 October 2020. The global community working for justice will come together virtually for a series of dialogues, brainstorming, and round tables to advance SDG 16's call to ensure equal access to justice for all during the Decade of Action to Deliver the Global Goals. The Global Week for Justice will comprise a series of events tied to SDG 16, organized by different justice partners, targeting different audiences.

More information is available at: [justice.sdg16.plus/globalweek](https://justice.sdg16.plus/globalweek)



*The Global Dialogue of Justice Leaders will identify practical steps to transform how we do justice, through a focus on data and evidence, innovation, finance, and partnerships. The dialogue will be strategic and action oriented.*

## Goals and Anticipated Outcomes

Justice leaders will explore priorities for action in the following areas:

1. Data and evidence to steer reform – to understand justice problems, predict changing patterns of demand, track people’s experiences when they come into contact with the justice system, and identify what will work to increase access to justice.
2. Innovation to transform justice systems – through new ways of de-escalating disputes, solving justice problems online, exploring the full potential of technology - to bring justice closer to the people, and transforming justice institutions so they are more open and serve communities.
3. Smarter financing strategies – that redirect resources from ineffective or counterproductive approaches, invest in lower-cost approaches with potential to close the justice gap, and build partnerships with health, education, social protection, and other sectors.
4. New types of partnership – that bring together the many partners with a role in preventing and solving justice problems, empower grassroots justice defenders, are inclusive of communities that face the highest levels of injustice, and strengthen the global movement for justice for all.
5. Open justice systems - that remove barriers to people’s empowerment to address their justice problems, that provide justice services that are responsive to their users and that employ openness and accountability to increase fairness of outcomes.

The meeting will result in an outcome statement that identifies priority actions and follow-up. International partners and donors will be invited to indicate how they can support national and global action for justice for all and all participants will explore how the resources available for COVID-19 recovery might be leveraged to create better justice outcomes for people.

Priority actions will be taken forward through regional groupings, peer learning between justice leaders, and through direct support to ministers who request it:

- OECD member countries and their partners will continue the work in the context of subsequent technical and regional meetings of the Global Policy Round Table on Access to Justice, to take place in early 2021 – to explore practical ways to render justice systems more people-centred and responsive to the needs of different group of people and business.

- OGP member countries will work on opening justice systems through co-created commitments in their Action Plans on empowering people to resolve justice problems, making systems more transparent and accountable, and using justice systems to strengthen open government.
- Justice leaders can come together in regional or thematic meetings to strengthen their resolve to transform the justice sector's role in pandemic response, economic recovery, and societal reset.
- Pathfinder countries will bring the ambitions for a fair, resilient, and inclusive recovery through people-centered justice into the heart of the UN's common agenda to build back better.
- Partners and donors can support ongoing work at the regional, national and local level, with a specific focus on those furthest behind and the countries most at risk of social unrest and violence.

## Partners

The **Department of Justice Canada** considers access to justice to be a fundamental value of the Canadian justice system, flowing from Canada's respect for the rule of law. Justice Canada is working to advance a people-centered approach to justice that puts consideration of the individual at the heart of justice responses by providing access to information, programs and policies.

Justice Canada has created an Access to Justice Secretariat, which serves as a hub and point of contact for SDG 16 and the vast breadth of access to justice related work that colleagues throughout the Department are undertaking. Canada is a member of the Pathfinders, the OECD, and the Open Government Partnership.

In 2019, the **Pathfinders'** Task Force on Justice, in its [Justice for All report](#), set out an agenda for action to deliver on the promise of equal access to justice for all by 2030. To achieve this goal, we need to transform how we do justice. We need to start with an understanding of people's justice problems, design solutions to prevent and resolve them, build a justice sector that is open and inclusive, and that works in collaboration with other sectors such as health, education, housing, and employment.

Almost 40 countries endorsed the *principles of people-centered justice* in a series of declarations on Access to Justice. An alliance of the world's leading justice organizations has united behind a shared vision and strategy for justice for all.

The **OECD** has developed [the OECD Flagship Report on Access to Justice for Inclusive Growth: Putting People at the Centre](#), along with the *criteria on people-centered legal and justice services*, in the context of economic recovery. Building on the OECD 2018 Riga statement on *Investing in Access to Justice for all*, adopted by many OECD member and partner countries, it is currently developing a people-centered and inclusive justice framework.

Its Policy Round Table on Access to Justice aims to provide a platform for countries to discuss the role of justice systems in enabling inclusive and effective recovery, in the context of growing legal needs and increasing fiscal constraints.

**The Open Government Partnership** brings together a coalition of members, civil society organizations and other stakeholders committed to a more open and accessible justice system in order to share best practices, co-create new commitments and develop justice data and indicators for SDG16.

A fast-growing number of OGP countries are working on people-centered justice in the context of their OGP Action Plans. Sixty-eight of 78 countries have included a justice commitment that will significantly open government to people.

**The Justice Leadership Group** – which brings together former ministers, attorneys general and chief justices – has committed to supporting serving ministers to share best practices and identify urgent actions to put justice at the heart of pandemic response. In April 2020 they issued a [Call to Action](#) for Justice Leadership in a Pandemic.

## Format

The meeting will be held online on Tuesday 20 October. The meeting will be in English, French, and Spanish. Ministers will be asked to indicate whether they would like to reserve time during the meeting to make an intervention.

## Background Documents

### [Justice for All Report](#)

Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (also in: [Spanish](#) and [French](#))

### [Justice for All and the Public Health Emergency](#)

Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (also in: [Spanish](#), [French](#), [Arabic](#) and [Ukrainian](#))

### [Justice for All and the Economic Crisis](#)

Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (also in: [Spanish](#), [French](#) and [Ukrainian](#))

### [Access to Justice for Inclusive Growth: Putting People at the Centre](#)

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

### [Impact of COVID-19 on Access to Justice](#)

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

### [A Guide to Open Government and the Coronavirus: Justice](#)

Open Government Partnership (OGP)

### [Transparency and Accountability at the Frontlines of Justice](#)

Open Government Partnership (OGP)

### [Call to Action for Justice Leadership in a Pandemic](#)

Justice Leadership Group