THE RULE OF LAW IN SENEGAL
REMARKS BY INNOCENT CHUKWUMA

Protocols…

Kind words…

I welcome the opportunity to be here and thank the World Justice Project and its partners in Senegal for putting together this important convening on such a topical issue as the Rule of Law.

I congratulate the government of Senegal for agreeing to partner with the WJP in the project. I know of several countries in the region that may not allow such a convening to take place within its territory, how much more participating in it. Therefore, this convening adds to the pedigree of Senegal as the oldest democracy in West Africa.

I would also like to apologize for the absence of our Vice President, Hilary Pennington. Hilary had planned to be here to personally make these remarks but took ill over the weekend and on the doctor's advice could not travel.

Why Ford is supporting WJP in the project and why Senegal

You may want to ask why Ford is partnering the WJP in this project and why in Senegal?
The answer is simple: For almost ten years, if I am not mistaken, the WJP has been producing the signature annual global Rule of Law Index, which ranks countries performance on respect for the rule of law across 8 indicator areas. For many African countries, including mine however, the index had become an annual record and reminder of rule of law woes in the region, leading to the question, what is to be done to remedy the situation?

So, when WJP approached us for partnership in a project aimed at improving respect for the rule of law in the region by engaging and bringing together sectors of society that are not normally involved in the conversations and encouraging collaboration among them on the issue, we jumped at it.

The choice of beginning with Senegal was easy. Senegal is in many ways deservedly regarded as a success story of stable democratization and good governance in Africa and, peaceful transition of power from one political party to

another. The most recent being the March 2012 celebrated general elections, which brought the current government of President Macky Sall to power. Since its inauguration the government has taken a number of positive steps to promote transparency and accountability in the conduct of public affairs. The most visible indicators are the creation of a Ministry of Good Governance and launching of a broad national program on accountable governance aimed at improving response to social demand in a whole range of fields including fight against corruption, decentralization, parliamentary control, judiciary reform, public administration efficiency, economic and social activity and human rights.

However, the concept of the rule of law as a constraint on social and political behavior, particularly behavior of those in positions of authority in government, and encouragement of people to ask questions and demand answers for the things they care about, are yet to take deep root in Senegal as in many other Africa countries and require long term engagement to entrench. We need not be reminded of the efforts of the previous government to prolong its stay in office as recent as in 2012, including attempts to illegally change the constitution in order to achieve a third term agenda.

Therefore the need to begin with a country where it is easier to make progress and proceeding from there to the more difficult countries such as mine is almost irresistible.

Our hope and Commitment
Our hope is that this convening would lead to:

- The establishment of a multi-stakeholder network of state and non-state actors in Senegal that would continue to work after the meeting to ensure that the government of Senegal addresses the few impediments standing in its way in entrenching the culture of the rule of law and open government in the country.
- On our part, we would continue to partner with the WJP in expanding its work on rule of law and open government in West Africa

About Ford in West Africa

- Older than most countries in the region – since 1958
- Current work focuses on governance, youth and the media