

**Security Council**

Distr.: General
14 January 2026

Original: English

**Letter dated 13 January 2026 from the Permanent Representative of
Somalia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to inform you that the Federal Republic of Somalia, in its capacity as the President of the Security Council for the month of January 2026, will hold an open debate entitled “Reaffirming international rule of law: pathways to reinvigorating peace, justice and multilateralism” on 26 January 2026.

In this regard, I should be grateful if the present letter and the attached concept note (see annex) could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Abukar Dahir **Osman**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 13 January 2026 from the Permanent Representative of Somalia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the high-level open debate of the Security Council on the theme “Reaffirming international rule of law: pathways to reinvigorating peace, justice and multilateralism”, to be held on 26 January 2026

Introduction

The international rule of law is a fundamental pillar of multilateralism and keystone of the pursuit of cooperation among nations and the maintenance of international peace and security. Both the Security Council and the General Assembly have reaffirmed in numerous resolutions, declarations and statements their commitment to the rule of law.

On 21 February 2014, the President of the Security Council made a statement reaffirming the Council’s “commitment to international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and to an international order based on the rule of law and international law, which are essential for cooperation among States in addressing common challenges, thus contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security” ([S/PRST/2014/5](#)). The declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the rule of law at the national and international levels states that the rule of law applies to all States equally, and to international organizations, including the United Nations.¹ For close to two decades, the General Assembly has renewed this pledge annually through the adoption of a resolution recognizing that the rule of law is not merely a legal principle but the foundation of the United Nations and the key to lasting peace, equality and global trust.²

Yet despite these solemn commitments, consistently reaffirmed by both the Security Council and General Assembly, the international community continues to confront significant challenges in upholding the rule of law among nations. For many regions, the rule of law among nations carries significant weight in the light of historical inequities and the enduring legacies of colonial rule. For Africa, and indeed for all nations that have known the cost of conflict and inequality, the international rule of law is not an abstraction. It is the guarantor of sovereignty, dignity and justice. Concerns about selective accountability and disproportionate scrutiny have, at times, strained confidence in multilateral institutions, underscoring the need for renewed efforts to ensure fairness, consistency and legitimacy in global governance.

The eightieth anniversary of the Charter of the United Nations is a timely occasion for the Security Council to reflect on the strides made and the challenges that remain in upholding the rule of law among nations. This open debate invites Member States to further engage in meaningful dialogue on the concrete steps the United Nations and its membership can take to advance peace through the

¹ “We recognize that the rule of law applies to all States equally, and to international organizations, including the United Nations and its principal organs, and that respect for and promotion of the rule of law and justice should guide all of their activities and accord predictability and legitimacy to their actions.” ([A/RES/67/1](#)).

² A resolution on the rule of law at the national and international levels has been adopted every year since 2006. For such resolutions adopted since 2012, see resolutions [68/116](#), [69/123](#), [70/118](#), [71/148](#), [72/119](#), [73/207](#), [74/191](#), [75/141](#), [76/117](#), [77/110](#), [78/112](#), [79/126](#) and [80/167](#). Moreover, in action 7 of the Pact for the Future (resolution [79/1](#)), Heads of State and Government affirmed the rule of law as the foundation to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

revitalization of the international rule of law. This year in particular calls on us to reaffirm the importance of the rule of law in shepherding a rapidly changing international order and strengthening the framework of multilateral cooperation.

Background

Recent armed conflicts across the globe seem to have fostered a public perception that the international rule of law is being eroded by repeated breaches in such conflicts. The Security Council's inability to resolve these conflicts is viewed in many quarters as an indication that the capacity of relevant international institutions to enforce the rule of law has significantly diminished. This perception can fuel distrust, which in turn may generate ripple effects in various parts of the world, ultimately contributing to the gradual weakening of the rule of law and of international legal norms in the conduct of international relations.

However, good faith observance of international obligations, peaceful settlement of disputes, and multilateral cooperation among States in solving economic and social problems offer reliable pathways forward to reinforce the rule of law among nations and restore confidence in international institutions and processes.

The principle of good faith, enshrined in Article 2 (2) of the Charter and elaborated on in the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, obliges all Member States to fulfil in good faith the obligations they have assumed under international law. The Declaration makes clear that good faith is not merely a moral aspiration but a legal imperative underpinning the credibility and legitimacy of the international system. Good faith serves as a safeguard for mutual trust, predictability and accountability.

The international rule of law is premised on three cornerstone principles enshrined in the Charter:

First, the Charter's preamble affirms faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women, and in the equality of nations large and small. The protection of the dignity of all human beings and the prevention of gross human rights violations was emphasized in the Declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the rule of law at the national and international levels, in which Member States committed themselves to ensuring that "impunity is not tolerated for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity or for violations of international humanitarian law and gross violations of human rights law, and that such violations are properly investigated and appropriately sanctioned, including by bringing the perpetrators of any crimes to justice".

Second, the Charter affirms the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples. This principle has led to the emancipation and liberation of billions of people across the world in the past 80 years, including many of those whose representatives are sitting at present in the Council.

Third, the Charter prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State. Despite its imperfections and occasional failures, we must acknowledge that the prohibition of the use of force has brought substantial benefits to humanity and has obliged even those who breach it to seek legal justifications for their actions.

Article 2 (3) and Chapter VI of the Charter state that all Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered. The peaceful settlement of disputes reinforces the rule of law by substituting law for force as the primary instrument of

international relations. The Declaration on Principles of Friendly Relations affirms that States “shall accordingly seek early and just settlement of their international disputes by negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements or other peaceful means of their choice”. African States have increasingly done so, resorting to judicial settlement of their maritime and boundary disputes and thus demonstrating growing trust in both the International Court of Justice and regional courts. Peaceful settlement is not merely the absence of armed conflict, but the presence of just and equitable solutions grounded in law and supported by trustworthy international institutions and processes.

The Declaration on Principles of Friendly Relations elaborates on the duty of States to cooperate with one another in accordance with the Charter. Specifically, Article 1 (3) of the Charter calls for “international cooperation in solving problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all”. The Declaration specifies that cooperation must be based on “principles of sovereign equality and non-intervention”. This obligation resonates strongly for African regional organizations, which continue to strengthen their legal and institutional capacities while calling for more equitable global partnerships. It encompasses collective efforts to maintain international peace and security, promote sustainable development, and ensure respect for international law and human rights. This has led to the steady growth of African regional judicial bodies, which now play an essential role in Africa’s legal landscape.

Reaffirming the international rule of law and reinforcing its role through the observance of international obligations in good faith, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and the strengthening of multilateral cooperation will help to rebuild trust and uphold the ideals of the Charter, including peace, justice and collective security.

Objectives and guiding questions

The objective of this open debate is to reaffirm the importance of the international rule of law for the maintenance of peace and security in the world and to identify ways and means of fortifying it and preventing its gradual erosion through breaches and violations. Participants are invited to address the following guiding questions:

- (a) What proactive regional and global strategies should be developed and implemented to address emerging threats to the international rule of law, and how can lasting collaborative frameworks be created to identify, prevent and counter such challenges in the coming decades?
- (b) What actions may be undertaken by the Security Council, and the United Nations in general, to bolster the international rule of law and to prevent its erosion?
- (c) Which currently underutilized provisions of the Charter and constitutive acts of regional organizations should be better enforced to strengthen the rule of law amid growing inter-State conflicts, including on the African continent, and to contribute to more effective maintenance of peace and security around the world?
- (d) In what ways can the various organs of the United Nations more effectively coordinate and mobilize their respective mandates to promote coherence, enhance impact and advance the rule of law among nations? What structural, political, technical and resource barriers prevent this coherence? What pragmatic institutional and process-oriented reforms would overcome such barriers?

Format, briefers and participation

The high-level open debate will be held on 26 January 2026 at 10 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time), in an open debate format to ensure wide participation. It will be chaired by the President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and will feature briefings by the Secretary-General, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, and the Founding President of the African Institute of International Law, Judge Abdulqawi Yusuf (via videoconference).
