



EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS
COUR EUROPÉENNE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

**Video message for the Opening Session
of the 30th edition of the World Law Congress**

Speech by Mattias Guyomar

Tirana, Albania - 7 May 2026

Excellencies,

Distinguished speakers,

Fellow jurists,

On behalf of the European Court of Human Rights, I wish to thank you for giving me an opportunity to address this Opening Session of the World Law Congress.

Thank you also for welcoming our colleague, Judge Darian Pavli, who is representing the Court in-person.

What can a court do for peace?

I asked a similar question recently, in a lecture I gave at a university in Kyiv, in war-torn Ukraine.

Of course, a court of law cannot silence the guns of war.

But courts and jurists are anything but powerless in the face of armed conflict.

On the wall behind me are the words of René Cassin: former President of our Court; one of the architects of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the European Convention; recipient of your World Peace and Liberty Award; and Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

“There will never be peace on this planet as long as human rights are violated in any part of the world”

His words have been inscribed on the walls of our Court to serve as a constant reminder of the purpose of our work – and the work of all jurists:

To use the language of law as an instrument in the service of Peace.

That is the very premise on which the World Law Congress is built.

Over the past decades, our Court has been called upon to examine many situations of armed conflict in Europe.

There have been over 30 inter-State cases since the European Convention on Human Rights entered into force in 1953.

In addition, over the course of its history, the Court has received well over 18,000 individual applications concerning armed conflicts.

Currently, 7,500 such applications are pending before the Court and processed by a specialised Conflicts Unit.

The most emblematic example of our Court's role in response to armed conflict is its judgment in the inter-State cases *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, delivered last year.

This historic ruling encapsulates the essence of the Court's judicial role.

First, in ensuring **accountability**. Without accountability, there can be no lasting peace.

Our Court currently remains the only international judicial body holding Russia accountable for violations of the human rights protected by the Convention.

Second, in recording **truth**.

Our Court's judgments provide a permanent historical record bearing a legal stamp.

Third, in defending **sovereignty**.

It shows that the European public order cannot tolerate the forced erasure of the legal identity of a Member State.

Our Court has also helped **indemnify victims**, for example in Cyprus and in Georgia, and **solidify peace**, for example in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Northern Ireland.

Our judgments create safeguards so that human rights and fundamental freedoms – 'the very foundations of justice and peace in the world', according to the Convention's Preamble – are not easily undermined.

And they convey this important message:

That human rights always matter.

In peacetime and in times of war.

I wish to wholeheartedly thank you for hosting this 30th edition of the World Law Congress.

It is as necessary and relevant as it was back in 1963.

The first "World Conference on Peace Through Law" took place in a world marked by geopolitical tensions and great uncertainty.

Today, once again, our world is moving away from the fundamental values and principles of international law.

At such a time, we need unity and solidarity of all jurists worldwide.

To me, this Congress embodies such unity and solidarity.

And a shared commitment to a world governed by law, not by force.

In 2027, our Court will contribute to the idea of "Peace Through Law" and the message of the World Law Congress, including by holding a commemorative event on this theme.

Today, let me wish you inspiring discussions, and I very much look forward to joining you in-person in May next year.

Thank you.