



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

United Nations Treaty Bodies Meeting

Welcome address

Speech by Mattias Guyomar

Strasbourg, 30 June 2026

Dear Chairman Soh,

Dear Chairs, Deputy Chairs and Representatives of the UN Treaty Bodies,

Fellow Judges,

Distinguished guests

Dear friends,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of all the Judges of the European Court of Human Rights, at our Human Rights Building.

We are delighted to see so many of you here with us in the room and others joining us online.

I am also glad to see so many of my fellow Judges present, which clearly shows the high level of interest in this meeting from our Court.

I wish to thank in particular Vice-President Jelić, *dear Ivana*, as well as Judges Seibert-Fohr and Sancin, *dear Anja* and *Vasilka*, for being the Focal Points in charge of preparing today's meeting. Your shared experience of having served with the United Nations Human Rights Committee, and acted as its Vice-Chairs,¹ contributes to the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives that broaden and enrich our Court's judicial perspective.

The four of us have already met with the Human Rights Committee's Chair, Chang-rok Soh, earlier this month, to prepare this meeting.

It is good to see you again – this time on-screen, *dear Chang-rok*.

Finally, we are most grateful to the René Cassin Foundation, represented today by its President Emmanuel Decaux, Director Sebastien Touzé, and Arthur Quattrochi, for their generous support.

Today's meeting is for us a major and much-anticipated event. It is also long overdue.

¹ Vice-President Ivana Jelić was Member (2015-2018) and Vice-Chair (2017-2018) of the UN Human Rights Committee. Judge Anja Seibert-Fohr was Member (2013-2018) and Vice-Chair (2015-2017) of the UN Human Rights Committee. Judge Vasilka Sancin was Member (2019-2022) and Vice-Chair (2021-2022) of the UN Human Rights Committee.

Vice-President Jelić, Judge Seibert-Fohr, and others will recall some of the past meetings held with the Human Rights Committee. The last one was in Geneva in 2019, and there had also been a previous one in 2016.

More recently, we welcomed representatives of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at a legal symposium held by the Court in March this year.

But today is exceptional. To have so many of our Judges meet with such a large delegation from all the UN treaty bodies, makes this event the first of its kind.

Last year, we marked the 75th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Also last year, you celebrated the 60 years of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

And this year, you will mark the 60th anniversary of the adoption, on 16 December 1966, of the two International Covenants.

These human rights instruments have a shared DNA.

Their common aim was to transpose the aims and aspirations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – the “common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations” – into binding international law.

And such was indeed the aim pursued by all other core international human rights treaties, adopted over the past decades.

This year, we also commemorate the 50th anniversary of the passing of René Cassin: the first French Judge, President of the Court, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

Many of us attended yesterday’s colloquium organised by the Fondation René Cassin.

And earlier this year, we inaugurated a seminar room dedicated to his name.

René Cassin is also a figure who unites us. Transposing the Universal Declaration into the system of international law was his life goal. He was one of the chief architects of the European Convention but also of the Universal Declaration and the two Covenants.

Celebrating these anniversaries is important because they remind us of the origins of the international instruments which form the basis of our work.

How they were born out of the tragedy of the two world wars and the near-total destruction of human rights and human dignity.

How they were brought into being to prevent this scourge from ever happening again – and to protect world peace by protecting human rights, law, and justice.

Anniversaries are regular reminders of the importance of protecting this precious legacy, as it is being overshadowed by growing attacks on multilateralism and international law.

An opportunity to reflect what would happen if, one day, these instruments – and the institutions which guard them – were to be weakened.

For us to meet with you, our UN colleagues, at a time when international law and the United Nations system are being undermined, is also to send a signal of support.

Two weeks ago, the 38th meeting of the Chairs of the Treaty Bodies made a reference to “a time of continuing institutional and financial pressure on the treaty body system”.²

The institutions that safeguard the rule of law and international law are attacked and de-funded.

The impact of this situation on your work is evident.

With clear implications for countless rights holders.

This affects the United Nations but also international courts.

The legitimacy and independence of international judges is being called into question as means of undermining the authority of the institutions in which they serve.

With the ultimate aim of undermining the credibility of international law itself.

In times like these, coming together and maintaining solidarity is more important than ever.

In early June, alongside many Supreme and regional court Presidents, I had the pleasure to speak at an international congress in Brasília on the topic of *The Rule of Law and Judicial Ethics*. One of the speakers at the conference was the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Professor Margaret Satterthwaite, who presented her work and shared insights from around the world. This global perspective is of great value when we are looking for the best ways to preserve and protect the Rule of Law and the independence of the judiciary. Professor Satterthwaite and I agreed to find ways to work together – to help us become better informed and to broaden our views beyond the European, but not only. As she observed in her recent report³: “when citizens feel seen by and connected to justice systems, the systems themselves are more readily recognized as being central to democracy and human rights, and thus worthy of protection”. This approach directly reflects the Court's own priority of visibility, and that is why I am always delighted to find new partners, especially at the United Nations, to help shine a stronger light on the work of international justice.

Beyond solidarity, our meeting today is an opportunity to nourish dialogue.

The Court often refers to the case-law of the UN Treaty Bodies in its judgments, as part of “Relevant International Materials or Practice”.

It also generally interprets the Convention in the light of the obligations arising out of the other applicable international instruments.

To quote some recent examples:

- The Court referred to the General Comment No. 37 by the Human Rights Committee in the context of the use of rubber bullets in the policing of demonstrations, in its recent Grand Chamber judgment *Tsaava and Others v. Georgia* (GC, 2025);⁴
- It cited the Concluding Observations on France* by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in last year's judgment *L. v. France* (2025)⁵ which concerned the secondary victimisation of victims of gender-based violence.

² [Chairs' conclusions of the 38th Annual meeting of Chairs](#)

³ Human Rights Council Fifty-sixth session 18 June–12 July 2024 Agenda item 3 Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development: A/HRC/56/62 Safeguarding the independence of judicial systems in the face of contemporary challenges to democracy, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Margaret Satterthwaite.

⁴ *Tsaava and Others v. Georgia* [GC], nos. 13186/20 and 4 others, §203, 11 December 2025

⁵ *L. and Others v. France*, nos. 46949/21 and 2 others, §121, 24 April 2025

- In its historic climate judgment *Verein KlimaSeniorinnen and Others v. Switzerland* (GC, 2024), the Court referred to the General Comment No. 26 issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change.⁶

Being aware of each other's work is crucial and we have good tools to help us in that. This includes the UN Treaty Body Database⁷, the UN Human Rights Knowledge Gateway⁸, and, on the Court's side, the Knowledge Sharing Platform.

Obviously, each body is entitled to interpret its human rights text autonomously and to develop its own jurisprudence.

But the different natures of our institutions can also bring advantages.

The pronouncements of the Treaty bodies often have more flexibility than international courts in interpreting human rights.

On the other hand, international courts can give these pronouncements a binding force whenever they base their decisions on these interpretations.

The United Nations is a key partner of the Court, and I hope I can speak on behalf of everyone in this room when I express my wish that our meetings become more regular in the future.

On this note, I wish all of us fulfilling exchanges, and I hand over the floor to the Chair of the Human Rights Committee.

Dear Chang-rok, the floor is yours.

⁶ *Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland* [GC], no. 53600/20, §178, 9 April 2024

⁷ tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Home.aspx

⁸ [OHCHR Knowledge Gateway](https://www.ohchr.org/en/knowledge-gateway)