

CCBE Statement on the protection and enforcement of international law

29/09/2023

The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) represents the Bars and Law Societies of 46 countries and, through them, more than 1 million European lawyers.

The CCBE has been representing the views of European lawyers and defending the legal principles on which democracy and the rule of law are based for more than 60 years. In its activities, the CCBE monitors the defence of the rule of law, the protection of fundamental and human rights and freedoms, including the right of access to justice, the protection of the client, and the protection of the democratic values inextricably associated with such rights.

Lawyers play an indispensable and central role in upholding the rule of law within any society. They are the defenders of justice, entrusted with the duty of ensuring that the principles of justice, fairness, and equity are upheld in all aspects of our lives. Lawyers are not only the guardians of domestic laws but also serve as the vanguards of international law, advocating for the adherence of States to the binding conventions and agreements that promote global peace and cooperation.

As we gather in Poland, a nation that has experienced tragic historical events, is witnessing the devastating consequences of war in its neighbouring Ukraine and is facing itself a range of rule of law challenges, we urge all nations to prioritise compliance with the binding international treaties and agreements that underpin global stability. We firmly call for the immediate cessation of any military aggression by the Russian Federation, for the sake of preserving human lives and the inviolability of international law. Furthermore, we urge all States to fulfil their international obligations in terms of providing protection to the victims of conflicts, recognising that the damage of conflict transcends borders and affects humanity as a whole. We also highlight again the need to bring all those responsible for war atrocities to justice, including effective prosecution of those responsible for war crimes or crimes against humanity before the International Criminal Court¹.

In the annals of history, we find countless instances where the respect for international treaties and agreements has served as the bedrock of international cooperation. International law, comprising a comprehensive set of rules and principles governing the relationships between States and other global actors, is a testament to our collective commitment to peace and justice. However, history has also shown us the dire consequences of non-compliance with these binding agreements, resulting in military aggression, violence, and the tragic erosion of civil rights and freedoms.

The CCBE strongly calls upon the governments of all nations to protect and safeguard the fundamental values upon which our shared humanity thrives: an international legal order based on democratic values and a strict adherence to the rule of law. These values are intrinsically intertwined with principles such as freedom, mutual respect, open dialogue, stability, and the unwavering respect for the rule of law itself.

¹ See [CCBE Statement on the invasion of Ukraine](#) of 25/02/2022.

We also call upon all lawyers across Europe to engage with their respective governments and advocate for the imperative need to ensure strict adherence to international law. It is only through our collective commitment and unwavering dedication to the principles enshrined within international law that we can truly aspire to a world where justice prevails, where conflicts are resolved peacefully, and where the rights and freedoms of all individuals are cherished and preserved.