



GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG
Permanent Representation to the
United Nations Office and other
international organizations in Geneva



CONCEPT NOTE

59th UN Human Rights Council

Protecting lawyers to ensure access to justice

The New Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer

Date: 27 June 2025

Time: 13h00-14h00 CEST
(A light lunch will be served at the beginning of the event)

Place: Palais de Nations, Room XXV and online

Organisers: Council of Europe, Permanent Representations of Luxembourg to the United Nations and other international organisations in Geneva and to the Council of Europe, the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

Co-Sponsors: Andorra, Belgium, Chile, Costa Rica, Estonia, Greece, Poland, International Commission of Jurists, Lawyers for Lawyers, American Bar Association, Inter American Bar Association, the Pan African Lawyers Union, LAWASIA

Background:

The legal profession plays a crucial role in upholding the rule of law, ensuring access to justice, and safeguarding human rights, starting with the right to a fair trial. However, lawyers worldwide continue to face threats, harassment, and undue interference in their work. In response to these challenges, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers adopted, on 12 March 2025, the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer, an international treaty aimed at strengthening legal guarantees for lawyers' independence and security. It was opened for signature in Luxembourg on 13 May 2025 and has already been signed by 17 states.

This is a milestone, as it will be the first international legally binding instrument dedicated to protecting the rights of lawyers and those of their professional associations. Moreover, the Convention also provides the possibility for non-Member States of the Council of Europe to become a party to the Convention, extending its protective reach beyond Europe.

At its core, the Convention is not solely about protecting the rights of lawyers; it is about safeguarding the very foundation of the rule of law. When lawyers can perform their duties free from fear or undue interference, they are enabled to defend the rights of all individuals, uphold justice, and ensure the access to the legal system for all. This is vital for the functioning of democratic societies where the rights of every person must be respected and protected.

Objective of the Event:

Against this background, the Council of Europe, the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe, The International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), and the Permanent Mission of Luxembourg to UNOG, convinced on the importance of this new Convention, organise a side event with the primary goal to raise awareness of the Convention and its main provisions and to promote its signature, ratification or accession widely, including non-Member States of the Council of Europe. The discussion will focus on the significance of the Convention in the broader framework of human rights and rule of law protection, its potential impact on the independence of legal professionals worldwide, and the need for collective support.

Programme and Speakers:

Moderator: *Mark Stephens*, IBAHRI Co-Chair

1. Opening remarks:

- *Ernstine Kornelis*, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg to UNOG

2. Protecting the profession of lawyer:

- *Margaret Satterthwaite*, UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers
- *Christoph Henrichs*, Council of Europe Chair of the Committee of Experts on the Protection of Lawyers (CJ-AV)
- *Roman Zavrsek*, CCBE first Vice-President
- *Sophie de Graaf*, Lawyers for Lawyers Executive Director

3. Q&A or interventions from the floor

4. Closing remarks

Format and Accessibility:

The event will take place in person during the 59th UN Human Rights Council session on 27 June and will also be live-streamed to ensure broader accessibility.