

## Speech by Dr Nataša Pirc Musar, President of the Republic of Slovenia on the occasion of the CCBE Plenary Session in Ljubljana on 29 May 2026

*In today's world, the importance of the independent legal profession is all the more pronounced. Europe and the world are facing growing uncertainty, various crises, the highest number of armed conflicts since the end of World War II, as well as increasing pressure on democratic institutions and judges of international courts. Only 12 per cent of the world's population lives in a liberal democracy, while as many as 72 per cent of people worldwide live in countries with autocratic regimes. That is why today's meeting is not merely a professional gathering; I see it above all as a symbol of our shared European commitment to the rule of law.*

*My esteemed colleagues, the legal profession is a calling that you carry in your hearts and uphold in your daily lives, because it requires more than just professional expertise. It requires humanity, respect for the dignity of every individual and respect for truth and justice. Lawyers are a source of hope for many who have been wronged and humiliated. It is not merely about winning a court case, but about strengthening people's trust in the judicial system, a system in which we believe and for which we advocate, as it is a vital pillar of the rule of law and of a state governed by law.*

*And we cannot speak of effective access to justice, equality before the law or genuine protection of human rights without an independent legal profession. Independent lawyers are not an obstacle to those in power, but rather one of the key safeguards of a democratic society. However, public confidence in the judiciary depends not only on laws and institutions, but also on the integrity of judges, lawyers and state prosecutors.*

*For this reason, the Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer is also of paramount importance, as it represents a significant European response to the frequent and growing pressures, threats and infringements on the independence of lawyers. I am pleased that the Republic of Slovenia signed the convention in February of this year with the aim of protecting lawyers and actively strengthening the European legal area and safeguarding fundamental rights. If a lawyer is under threat, so too is the individual's right to a defence and to professional legal assistance in a specific legal proceeding. I hope that the convention will be ratified as soon as possible. The adoption of the convention is a response to the increasing pressure, control, smear campaigns, restrictions on work and even violence that lawyers face in various parts of Europe and the world. I therefore express my solidarity and support for all lawyers around the world who are victims of harassment or persecution. Their work and yours serve as a reminder that the rule of law can never be taken for granted, but must be defended courageously and resolutely every single day. The protection of the legal profession therefore does not merely mean safeguarding a particular profession, but rather safeguarding every person's right to independent and effective legal assistance.*

*The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe plays an important role in this regard. European cooperation is more essential today than it has ever been before. We are facing challenges that no single country can address effectively on its own, ranging from the broader issue of the erosion of the rule of law in Europe to cyber threats, disinformation and, of course, technological change. That is why we need responsible leaders, mutual trust and European solidarity. We need institutions and professional organisations that will be able to defend the fundamental principles even when doing so is not politically easy. Also in the field of the legal profession, we need more Europe, not less.*