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Global State of Human Rights: First Annual Conference held together with the European Parliament at the Monastery of San Nicolò in Venice



Venice, 16 July 2021

The first Conference on the Global State of Human Rights, jointly organised in a hybrid format by the European Parliament and the Global Campus of Human Rights, was held today in Venice, at the Global Campus Headquarters, the Monastery of San Nicolò.

The Conference has been attended at the highest level by representatives of the European institutions and the United Nations system, national governments, academics from the Global Campus network, representatives of non-governmental organisations, human rights defenders, activists and students.

After the greetings of the City, delivered on behalf of the Mayor by Councillor Paola Mar, and the welcome speeches by the President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli, and the President of the Global Campus, Veronica Gomez, the discussions developed around three main items:

A Pandemic of Impunity: why does accountability matter?

Accountability is a necessary step to ensuring sustainable peace. The Conference confirmed that accountability contributes to a sense of justice for both affected communities and the global community, while impunity further violates individuals' and communities' rights of access to justice and effective remedies.

Improving the business and human rights relationship: what role can due diligence and a value-centred approach play?

The Conference has discussed a re-balancing of powers between private companies and state institutions in light of a proposal for an EU Directive defining due diligence obligations in the context of Sustainable Corporate Governance.

What is a values-based foreign policy and what is it worth when responding to human rights and democracy issues around the world?

The Conference has explored the COVID-19 pandemic as a potential game-changer for geopolitics, posing a threat to the EU's role as a "Normative Power". Nevertheless, new avenues are opening for cooperation with like-minded countries and partners to defend and promote human rights. The US and European countries and institutions are reshaping a new transatlantic agenda and an alliance of democracies for a values-based foreign policy.

The Global State of the Human Rights highlighted:

- the need for a new impetus to strengthen the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms across all world regions, in contexts that unfortunately witness an increase in large scale human rights violations;
- the activities of the European Union, which, thanks also to the constant stimulus and advocacy of the European Parliament, is increasingly gearing its foreign policy towards respect for human rights as an important element in its relations with third countries, leading to the adoption by the EU Council of the new global human rights sanctions regime and to significant stances being taken with regard to countries such as China and Russia;
- the strengthening of a values-based foreign policy, including through action on decision-making mechanisms to enable the adoption of increasingly firm and unambiguous positions on the defence of human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- the European Parliament's strong push for the adoption of legislation on corporate due diligence that can commit companies to using instruments and methods that do not jeopardize fundamental human rights and promote the fight against climate change and the protection of biodiversity;
- the role played by academia, and in particular by the Global Campus of Human Rights, in

developing the international human rights framework and critically informing policymaking at international, national and local level.

The next Global State of the Human Rights will take place in Venice in mid-July 2022.

FURTHER DETAILS

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