



**4<sup>th</sup> Congress of the World Conference on Constitutional Justice  
"The Rule of Law and Constitutional Justice in the Modern World"**

**11-14 September 2017  
Vilnius, Republic of Lithuania**

**Opening statement by H.E. Dalia Grybauskaitė  
President of the Republic of Lithuania**

Honorable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Behind the walls of this building you can see the beautiful architecture of Vilnius. It shows the centuries that are lying in our society's memory. It has always been our main ground for fight for freedom. We are proud that throughout its history Lithuania has never accepted any aggression against our country. For us freedom and the rule of law are the most important values.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you in our country for the Fourth Congress of the World Conference of Constitutional Justice.

Gathered here we are united by one mission: to promote and protect constitutional justice around the world.

The essential foundation for the constitutional justice, and by extension, our whole modern civilization is the rule of law. Here in Lithuania, we know the value of the rule of law not only from law books or political declarations. We know it from our experience, as for five decades we had been deprived of it, we had been occupied by a brutal totalitarian regime.

We know that the rule of law is not a blind reading of legal acts regardless of their content. The essence of the rule of law lies in the values behind these acts. There can be no rule of law when people are denied their dignity and freedom, or live under fear of being murdered, tortured, deprived of home, family and homeland.

We also know the price paid for the rule of law. It is thousands of lives of our freedom fighters and dissidents to whom justice and freedom was more valuable than life itself.

Today our determination to protect the rule of law is tested again.

In Europe, we are witnessing new attempts to redraw state borders by force. Military aggression in eastern Ukraine and the occupation of Crimea are followed by attempts to compromise the authority of the European Court of Human Rights.

Meanwhile, the alleged defense of national and religious identity is carried out by abusing the constitutional court and discrediting its mission to guarantee the rule of law.

There is hardly anything more cynical than the use of constitutional justice and the Constitutional Court in some countries for the commission of crimes and for justification of crimes.

It is a threat to the very foundations of international order and European security based on the UN Charter, the Helsinki Accords and the European Convention on Human Rights.

As politicians and judges, we have a special responsibility to protect the principles upon which the rule of law is based. Respect for human rights and democracy is not a subject of compromise.

Therefore, we cannot shake hands and will never welcome those who abuse the rule of law and whose decisions result in thousands of human tragedies.

We must support people around the world who strive for freedom, human rights and democracy today. We owe it to the heroes who sacrificed their lives for justice and liberty in the past, and to our future generations.

I believe that this Congress can make a significant contribution to the protection and consolidation of the rule of law, peace and security around the world.

Especially in today's environment when we see a lot of places in a lot of countries – starting from North Korea and finishing with ZAPAD exercises on our borders this week – that threats are still present in our world.

Vilnius is proud to host you.

Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania  
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<https://www.lrp.lt/en/activities/speeches/opening-statement-by-h.e.-dalia-grybauskaite-president-of-the-republic-of-lithuania-at-the-4th-congress-of-the-world-conference-on-constitutional-justice/28393>