



**4th Congress of the World Conference on Constitutional Justice
Vilnius, Republic of Lithuania, 11-14 September 2017
“The Rule of Law and Constitutional Justice in the Modern World”**

**Closing remarks
by
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President of the Venice Commission**

*President of the Constitutional Court of Lithuania,
Honourable Presidents and Judges of Constitutional Courts and equivalent bodies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The 4th Congress of the World Conference on Constitutional Justice on *The Rule of Law and Constitutional Justice in the Modern World* is drawing to an end. On behalf of all the participants to this Congress, I would like to thank our hosts, the Constitutional Court of Lithuania, for their generous hospitality and for their excellent organisation of this major event!

The World Conference is getting larger and larger and now has 110 member Courts – of which nearly all were represented here, at the 4th Congress!

I believe that this is a clear sign that the idea of bringing together networks of constitutional courts and courts with equivalent jurisdiction on a global level was indeed a good and now a successful one!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past three days we have been very busy discussing different concepts of the principle of the rule of law, the challenges it faces and we have considered this principle from the perspective of the law and the state as well as from that of the law and the individual.

We have also seen that the rule of law constitutes the cornerstone of every genuine legal system. This is because this principle is intrinsically linked to democracy and the protection of human rights.

The rule of law is also a fundamental constitutional principle and, as such, inseparable from the constitution.

The constitution, in turn, is empowered and protected by constitutional courts and courts with equivalent jurisdiction, since their role is one of guardianship of the constitution. These courts ensure the implementation of national constitutions, the respect for the rule of law and fundamental rights contained therein.

We have ended our Congress with the important stocktaking exercise on the independence of constitutional courts and courts with equivalent jurisdiction – an exercise which has been introduced after the 2nd Congress in Rio and which, I believe, is an essential one.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We know that the basic requirements for judicial independence are the same for both ordinary and constitutional court judges – but, we also know that constitutional court judges must be protected from any attempt of political influence because of their position, which is particularly exposed to criticism and pressure from other state powers due to decisions they render, based on the constitution of their respective countries.

The independence enjoyed by individual constitutional court judges in carrying out their professional duties is crucial and forms an integral part of the fundamental democratic principle of the separation of powers. Judges should not be subject to political influence and should always be impartial.

Your spirit of independence and your personal integrity are what provide, in turn, integrity to your Court.

In difficult times, being a part of the World Conference, where there is an exchange of experience on a global level, provides an unprecedented forum for constitutional judges. You can learn from problems other courts have experienced and from how they have overcome them or if not, why they had failed.

Our Conference also facilitates judicial dialogue between constitutional court judges on a global scale to further reflection on arguments, which promote the basic goals inherent to national constitutions.

In this respect, I sincerely hope that each and every one of you has taken up my challenge to try and meet at least three people from courts of different continents during this Congress!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to end with what is becoming a tradition in my concluding remarks at the congresses of the World Conference:

The World Conference on Constitutional Justice is here to assist you. It is a forum that is there for you, to share ideas with other judges and to provide support where it is needed.

Thank you very much for your attention.
