

Dear Presidents of Constitutional Courts,

Dear Constitutional Judges,

Dear Colleagues,

It is an immense honour for me to address the members, observers, and guests of the Balkan Constitutional Courts Forum once again.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude and respect for our kind hosts, the Constitutional Court of Kosovo, for having us here in Pristina for the Second Annual meeting of the Forum. It is a true pleasure to be here, among allies and friends, and thank you President Caka-Nimani for making this event happen.

Last year, when we gathered in Sofia, we all declared our most sincere intentions to lay the foundations of a lasting organisation of the constitutional courts of the countries from the Balkan region. I am delighted that one year later, we are still very much dedicated to this purpose, and the Forum is beginning to establish the working rhythm of a functioning vital organisation, as has always been my hope and true belief.

As we come together, we are not just representatives of our respective courts, of individual nations or legal systems. We are guardians of constitutional principles that serve as the bedrock of justice, democracy, and the rule of law – the pillars of modern civilization. Our work ensures that the fundamental rights of the individual are upheld, and the delicate balance between state power and citizens' freedoms is preserved.

In this moment of unprecedented global challenges, marked by rapid technological advancement, evolving societal norms, and increasing demands for

accountability and transparency – the role of constitutional courts has probably never been more vital. The decisions we render have far-reaching implications, not only for the legal frameworks of our respective countries but for the future of human rights and democratic governance worldwide.

The topic chosen for this year's Annual Meeting, centered around the *Evolutions in Contemporary Constitutional Justice*, is an ever-important subject which gives vast field for reflection and exchange of experience. I am certain that during the panels we will hear very interesting contributions and will engage in vivid discussions. As we embark on these discussions, we should do so with the recognition that constitutional justice is not static. It is, rather, a living and breathing entity that adapts to the changing needs and aspirations of society.

Over the past few decades, we have witnessed profound shifts in constitutional interpretation, and these shifts have had a deep and far-reaching impact on the way we understand governance, democracy, and human rights in our modern world. As jurists and supreme guardians of constitutionalism we are all amply aware that constitutions are not merely legal texts, but rather, foundational frameworks that reflect the values, principles, and aspirations of the societies they govern. As the world becomes more interconnected, more diverse, and more complex, the role of constitutional justice in upholding these foundational principles – such as the protection of individual rights, the balance of powers, and the promotion of the rule of law – becomes ever more crucial, hence our task becomes ever more urgent.

In this regard, the Balkan region, due to our somewhat unique historical fate, geo-political situation, and cultural idiosyncrasies, provides an even greater variety of examples and points for discussion.

Of course, beyond the technical aspects of constitutional law, this conference is also an opportunity to foster greater understanding and collaboration among our institutions. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, the challenges we face often transcend borders. The lessons we share, and the experiences we exchange, are vital in shaping not only our individual legal systems but the broader framework of constitutionalism in the Balkan region, and even on a global scale.

As judges, we are entrusted with the responsibility to interpret and safeguard the social contract between the state and its citizens. We must strive to ensure that justice is not only done but seen to be done – impartially, fairly, and transparently. In doing so, we affirm the trust that society places in us and strengthen the legitimacy of our constitutional orders.

I look forward to all of us engaging fully in the discussions, to sharing our insights and experiences, and to taking full advantage of the opportunity to learn from one another. The challenges before us may be complex, but together, we are more than capable of addressing them.

With that, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for your dedication to the Balkan Constitutional Courts Forum in particular, and to upholding the values of constitutional justice in general, and I look forward to a productive and inspiring conference.

Thank you.