

**24th Informal Seminar on Human Rights:
THE FUTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS - FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL
Keynote Address**

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Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

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Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to join you in Ulaanbaatar for the 24th Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights. I thank our Mongolian hosts and the organisers for bringing us together.

I am particularly pleased to address you as President of the Venice Commission, an institution of the Council of Europe whose membership and cooperation have long extended beyond the geographical boundaries of Europe.

The Venice Commission was established in 1990, at a particular moment in European history. Over the decades, however, its reach has become genuinely transcontinental. Its work today brings together 60 countries from different regions, constitutional systems and legal traditions. This experience has shown that, despite differences in history, culture, constitutional traditions and human rights protection frameworks, we share the same fundamental principles across continents.

Democracy, the rule of law and human rights do not belong to one single country, nor do they belong to a single continent. Constitutional systems can learn from one another, while respecting their different histories and traditions, because we all understand a common basic constitutional grammar.

We have experienced this common - though diverse - constitutional patrimony in the previous occasion of cooperation between the Venice Commission and Mongolia. In 2022, the Venice Commission, jointly with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, adopted an opinion concerning political parties. Most recently, in 2025, the Venice Commission adopted an opinion on the draft laws concerning the Constitutional Court, the Tsets, and its procedure.

Together with my fellow rapporteurs and Simona Granata-Menghini, Director of the Commission, I visited Mongolia in May 2025 in preparation for this opinion. We also took part in the joint seminar co-organised with the Constitutional Court on international standards of constitutional justice and their application here. I still remember with pleasure the warm welcome and hospitality shown to us in this wonderful country and indeed the fruitful discussions.

We greatly value our cooperation with Mongolia, and we stand ready to reinforce and deepen it further.

2. Today's seminar focuses on the local and global dimensions of human rights.

Rooted in human dignity, human rights have a universal dimension. Yet, entrenched in living history, they take different forms in different traditions and cultures, and they evolve over time.

In Europe, after the catastrophe of the Second World War, a multifaceted system of protection of human rights was gradually developed, interconnecting a plurality of actors - national, supranational and international. The historical experience suggested the necessity to complement the national protection with a further layer of safeguards.

Today, in Europe, any individual, after exhausting domestic remedies and subject to certain conditions, is entitled to bring a complaint before the European Court of Human Rights concerning the conduct of his or her own State. The ECHR provide a subsidiary remedy to be activated when domestic remedies do not provide sufficient protection. This possibility marked a profound development in the relationship between individual and public power.

Yet international protection was never intended to replace the national one. Human rights must live, first and foremost, within States: in constitutions, legislation, parliaments, independent courts, ombudsperson, other public institutions and the everyday practices of social life.

3. Since its establishment, the Venice Commission has been guided by a fundamental principle, that remains central to its work: human rights, democracy and the rule of law depend upon one another. Rights cannot flourish where power is arbitrary; democracy cannot endure without the

rule of law; and the rule of law must serve the protection of fundamental rights. The ultimate aim of a constitutional system is to guarantee the full enjoyment of fundamental rights through the organisation and limitation of public power.

For every person who believes that his or her rights have been violated, the decisive questions are very simple:

Where can I invoke my rights?

How can I reach an independent institution?

By whom will I be heard?

And can I obtain an effective remedy?

Ultimately, the credibility of a human rights system is put to test in the distance between the promise of a right and the reality experienced by the individual.

An effective protection of human rights begins with the correct enshrinement of a written catalogue in the constitution and with appropriate legislation which guarantees the effective exercise of these rights. The Venice Commission has worked with numerous countries on the preparation of the constitutional catalogues and on the design of laws that regulate and protect the exercise of fundamental rights.

However, declaration of rights – in the national constitutions or in international conventions – are not effective without robust democratic institutions and independent judges. The role of an independent Constitutional Court is of the utmost importance in the protection, interpretation and development of human rights in line with the aspiration of the society.

3. Today, that human rights face new challenges. Artificial intelligence can improve medicine, education, public services and access to justice, yet it can also reproduce discrimination and can take obscure decisions affecting people's lives. Data processing can enhance services while also threatening privacy and autonomy; unequal access to digital technologies can deepen inequalities. Social media help connecting people but also spread disinformation.

New technologies are at the same time opportunities and challenges to people's rights.

There can be no adequate answer to these challenges at only one level. No one can do the job all alone. Protecting human rights is a collective enterprise, involving judicial and non-judicial actors, civil society and public institutions.

I pay special tribute to civil society's indispensable contribution. It brings violations to light, helps individuals claim their rights and gives those least heard a voice in public decisions. Its freedom to act is itself a measure of the strength of human rights protection.

National institutions must remain the first guardians of human rights. Regional systems can reinforce those protections through common standards. And the global human rights system is more than ever indispensable to ensure human rights to everybody.

The human rights architecture of the future must be an architecture of cooperation. Such cooperation requires spaces for dialogue in an age confronting challenges that increasingly recognise no borders. Our task is to enable these different levels to speak to one another, learn from one another and reinforce one another.

Previous generations progressively transformed human dignity from a moral claim into an international commitment, from an international commitment into legal obligations, and from legal obligations into institutions, procedures and remedies.

Our responsibility is not simply to preserve that inheritance. It is to ensure that it remains capable of protecting the human person in the world that is coming.

In this context this seminar is a timely and promising occasion of reflection.

I thank the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), all the Mongolian authorities and all other co-organisers of this meeting and a special thank to the Constitutional court of Mongolia for making our participation possible.

On behalf of the Venice Commission, I wish you a successful and fruitful 24th Informal Seminar on Human Rights.

Thank you.