

Thank you to all of you, especially the President and all the lawyers of the Ordini degli Avvocati di Ragusa..

I am delighted to be here in Ragusa for the Assizes of the Mediterranean. The topics which we will discuss are about the challenges that are faced by lawyers of the Mediterranean, and shared by your colleagues in other European states.

We live in a time of considerable challenge. As European lawyers we share very strong values which we can use to meet these challenges.

We promote the supremacy of law, the independence of justice and the right to a fair trial. We stand for the defence of human rights. We defend the independence of the legal profession. We promote and preserve legal professional privilege, the core of our professional ethics.

We provide support for lawyers or bars who are persecuted for complying with their professional duties, especially those lawyers who defend human rights and freedom of expression. We promote the harmonisation of the profession in Europe, in professional practice and professional ethics and we uphold the highest standards of legal competence.

These are our core values.

What are the challenges we face? We live in a time of greater awareness of the abuse of human rights in many parts of the world, thanks to the wide and instant accessibility of news. We cannot hide from the challenges.

We face terrorism, now familiar in our own states. We face intolerance and prejudice, especially hate crime and attacks on people regarded as "other".

We face attacks upon the independence of judges and lawyers, which goes to the very heart of the rule of law and democracy. At

this time, the FBE is supporting lawyers and judges in Poland, and those in prison in Turkey and Egypt.

We face challenges to legal professional privilege, and a lack of respect for the ethics and core values of our profession.

Deepest of all in affecting the core of our values is the break-up of the membership of the EU, affecting me as an English solicitor because of BREXIT. Our family of lawyers, of bar associations, law societies and associations of attorneys-at-law and legal advisers stands together to meet these challenges.

In the next hours we will discuss many issues of importance to the international legal community, We will work together today and produce an understanding between us as European lawyers.

I conclude by thanking you for your warm welcome and your attention.

Grazie Mille.