

Speech for Closing the Conference in Ragusa.

Professor Sara Chandler QC (Hon)

My dear colleagues, we have worked hard and received the benefit of much wisdom and passion during these two days, thanks to the contributions of all the speakers. We have reviewed the role of the lawyer in Europe and across the mediterranean both North, South, East and West.

Why is this important for us?

Because we stand together in the face of all the challenges we face in this period of tension and conflict in our regions. We support the human rights of so many people displaced as refugees from the war zones.

We support the rights of our clients to the privilege of professional secrecy and our responsibility to ensure that the independence of the judiciary and the legal profession is preserved, and that there is a fair system of access to justice in courts that are accesible by distance and for the rich as for poor, for those people who cannot afford to pay for legal services.

We support our colleagues, lawyers who are in prison in Turkey, and in Egypt, detained while they undertake their professional duties.

There are many ways in which we do this as European lawyers, and our Bar Associations and Law Societies both national, regional and local join together in respecting our professional codes and now we have the opportunity to adopt the professional code of the European lawyer.

We are proud to be part of a network of around 1 million European lawyers who share our commitment to justice. We know that justice is under threat, the situation in France is critical, and in every country where governments adopt economic austerity courts are closed, lawyers' remuneration is reduced and financial assistance for people who cannot afford to pay for legal services is restricted.

Is just dead we ask? Not while we lawyers stand together to defend justice, the rule of law, human rights and access to justice. Together we lawyers can change many things as Essid Abdelaziz declared yesterday.

We have discussed the situation of migrant workers and their social security rights. Our role as lawyers means that we are at the heart of commerce, which benefits our economies. We are concerned to defend the right to defence, when that is at risk. Within every sector we defend the rights of women, and in particular we reviewed the progress of female lawyers.

The next opportunity that we have to meet together as European lawyers will be in Bologna. The Spring congress of the FBE will be held from 17 to 19 May, hosted by the Ordini

Forense di Bologna. You are all welcome, to participate and the theme will be “New families, new challenges”

In the background to this conference we have seen the dedicated work of President Giorgio Assenza, of all the team of the Ragusa Bar, Saro Tolomei and his team, Dominique Attias, Vice President of the Mediterranean Commission, Omar Abbouzzohour, Secretary of the Commission, Yves Oschinsky, Michele Lucherini Marta Cuadrada and the Barcelona Bar, who together with Giorgio Assenza and his team from the Ordini Forense di Ragusa have created this extraordinary assizes.

We congratulate the team FBE and Ragusa for this important and valuable contribution to our shared experience.

Thank you very much to all the interpreters for their expert work.

Farewell to all of you, we will go with a strong memory of the warmth of the welcome given to everyone present in this conference.

Grazie mille, gracias and merci beaucoup.