

SPEECH FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY BOLOGNA

Dear friends and colleagues,

It has been an honour to represent you during the last twelve months, through a period when there has been a strong need for the unity of European lawyers in the face of the many challenges we have faced together.

This year has consolidated our relationship with the CCBE, and we have continued to have our annual joint dinner. I am happy to report that together with the CCBE we have shown our support for judges in Poland, and we are organising a conference in September 2019 in Lisbon which for the first time ever will be a joint FBE and CCBE congress. We have supported the CCBE initiative on the Professional Code of the European Lawyer.

I am delighted to say that during the last 12 months I have accepted invitations from member Bar Associations on behalf of the FBE to speak in Bilbao, Warsaw, Poznan, Krakow, London, Leipzig, Berlin, Palermo, Milan, Barcelona, Napoli, Ragusa, Madrid, Milan, Barcelona and I have attended meetings in Exeter, Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Cologne, Brussels, and Torquay and for International organisations including the UIA in Toronto, and the American Bar Association and the IBA in London.

These meetings have been important opportunities for the Presidency to hear from local bar associations what the issues are in their jurisdictions, and how the FBE can assist and build a true network between European lawyers, together with the CCBE, and AEA/AEL Association of European Lawyers, and in many cities I have joined in with twinning events.

My theme for this year has been to defend the rule of law, defend the right to defend, the independence of the judiciary and legal profession, human rights and access to justice. This is at the heart of the FBE. I have supported smaller bar associations and I know very well the difficulties smaller bar associations have in participating in international activities, because I am a member of a small bar association. Whatever the size of our bars, whether the largest in Europe or the smallest, we all have an important role to play in the FBE. Our FBE family provides opportunities for bar members to participate in the work of our Commissions.

I have also supported the Eastern Bars Commission as we receive increasing reports on the attacks on the independence of the Legal Profession and the

judiciary, not only in Poland and Hungary, but also in Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia. Our grave concern has been expressed to the EU and the Council of Europe and also the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, with whom I met in London. Our FBE family is growing and we value the participation of all our members.

This includes our junior lawyers, who of course represent the future of the profession. I would like to know which Bar Associations will be sending candidates to the competitions organised by our commissions: The Young Lawyers Human Rights Oratory Competition in Poznan, 29/30 June, closing date 8th June and the Competition in September. I would like to encourage all bar associations to decide that they will fund at least one junior lawyer to attend the Congress in Warsaw in September, and all future Congresses.

The FBE Commissions give our members an opportunity to participate in the work of the Federation. I am happy to announce that there is now a new commission, an Equalities Commission, which will work on issues of discrimination starting with the theme of “Women in the Law”

I would like to echo what Christoph Munz said. In any election there can only be one successful candidate, one will be happy and one will be disappointed. It is a difficult decision to make to enter an election, and I thank both candidates for standing for election, for their courage in doing so, it is a brave thing to do. The FBDE is a family, and we will embrace you with love, be assured that our candidates will be surrounded by kindness and love.

Our most important commitment is to our clients, and through the FBE we can develop many ways in which we can serve and protect our clients. But how can our colleagues do that if they are in prison, and I am speaking here of our colleagues from member bar associations in Turkey. The Presidency has been active in expressing our support for these brave colleagues. I have written letters of concern to President Erdogan, with copies to the EU and Council of Europe. I have also written to the bar associations all over Turkey with our support. I participate in a conference in Berlin alongside Artur Wierzbicki and Marc Wesser of the Human Rights and Freedom Commission. Yves Oschinsky has recently returned from trial observation in Turkey and his report appears on the FBE website.

When the FBE Mediterranean Commission met in Ragusa in April, we heard from lawyers from all round the Mediterranean, and we discussed how to support lawyers in the Lebanon and in Tunisia in particular.

During the Presidential year there have been many important issues, including the increase in the use of Artificial Intelligence in law firms and the courts. The future of the profession will be different but our role will always remain. We are the guardians of the rule of law, access to justice, the defence of the defence and the defence of human rights.

It has been my privilege to share this role with you and to represent European lawyers this year.

I thank you for your trust in me this year, and for your attention now.

Grazie mille, Muchas. gracias, Veelen danke, Merci beaucoup and thank you.

Professor Sara Chandler QC (Hon)