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25th Anniversary of the creation of the Academy of European Law

European Parliament, Strasbourg, 15 March 2017

Speech from Mr Guido Raimondi, President of the European Court of Human Rights

“Dear Chairman Svoboda,

Dear Director Heusel,

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

Dear friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Check against delivery

It is with great pleasure that I accepted your kind invitation to address the eminent guests of this Anniversary Reception on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Academy of European Law, also known as “ERA”.

As we all know, the Academy of European Law was created at the initiative of the European Parliament to provide the legal professions with training and a forum for debate on European law.

25 years on, when one looks at the success story which has been written by the Academy since its foundation, one can say that the European Parliament was well-inspired in taking this initiative.

The high quality of the training offered, the wide range of subject-matters being explored, the impressive number of participants at training and other events and, last but not least, the high competence and dynamism of the Academy’s team under the authority of its Director, Mr Heusel, have indeed made the Academy what it is today: one of the leading institutions in the field of spreading knowledge and understanding of European Law.

Understandably, the emphasis in the work of the Academy is on European Union law but what is to the Academy’s credit is also the fact that it very early understood that a good understanding of Union law cannot be achieved without at the same time considering the European Convention on Human Rights, given that both are closely intertwined, as prominently evidenced by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights which builds to a significant extent on the Convention.

Very early into its existence, therefore, the Academy entered into a successful cooperation with the European Court of Human Rights, a cooperation which has indeed developed and expanded until the present day. In those early days, one of the driving forces on the Strasbourg side in fostering those ties was the then Deputy Registrar of the Court, Mr Herbert Petzold, who very early saw the Academy’s potential in promoting a comprehensive understanding of European Law across the continent and offered the Academy his full support.

It is therefore rather fortunate that the Academy is called the Academy of *European* Law and I would like to pay tribute here to the fact that the Academy entirely lives up to this broad definition of its

mandate by regularly devoting training sessions to aspects of the Strasbourg case-law or indeed integrating Strasbourg views in training sessions devoted to Union law.

So in view of the past 25 years, I can only wish the success story of the Academy to go on for 25 more years and beyond.

That being said, times have changed since the creation of the Academy. Our continent now finds itself confronted with a series of major internal and external crises which put under high pressure the basic European values – such as respect for human dignity, fundamental rights and the rule of law as well as the protection of minorities – which are the hallmark of our democratic societies and essential for their stability. The challenge now facing the Europeans is therefore to adjust to those changes by developing efficient strategies adapted to the magnitude of the problems while preserving those values as their legitimizing foundation. Each of our three institutions represented here tonight has an important role to play in this respect.

As far as the European Court of Human Rights is concerned, it will certainly remain vigilant but it goes without saying that its action cannot bear fruit without the support of the national parliaments and indeed the European Parliament.

I feel even more encouraged to say that as the European Parliament has always been very supportive of the Strasbourg Court and I would like to use this opportunity to pay tribute here not only to the constructive relationship which our two institutions have always had but also to the action of the European Parliament in favor of ensuring a high level of respect for fundamental rights both inside and outside Europe.

Among many others, a particularly worthwhile aspect of this action has been the European Parliament's constant concern to impact on the drafting of EU legislation so as to bring it in line with fundamental rights. The directives on procedural rights in criminal proceedings are just one example of this action. I am therefore confident that our relationship will continue to be very fruitful and that, among its many other tasks, the Academy of European Law will keep supporting us on this path, as it did today in a rather symbolic way, by bringing together in this place representatives of our three institutions.

May they all three, along with all democratic Europeans, remain united in promoting our common European values and our common political heritage.

Thank you.”