



EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS
COUR EUROPÉENNE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

**The European Convention on Human Rights at 70:
Milestones and Major Achievements**

**Closing remarks by President Robert Spano
European Court of Human Rights**

Strasbourg, 18 September 2020

Former President Sicilianos and I started the process of organising this conference in the middle of last year. Then work was, as always, intense, and although the challenges we in the Court were facing were daunting and worrying, they were understandable, foreseeable - although it was clear that formulating Convention solutions for the increased polarisation and divisions in European societies would prove difficult indeed.

The Conference was to take place on 4 May this year, but in January and February, a city in China called Wuhan started to make headlines and, as they say, the rest is history. All of our lives changed and the extent to which that change will transform our lives for the future still remains to be seen.

I would like to express my profound thanks to Alexander for his tenacity and close collaboration throughout the process of putting this event together despite the challenging environment in which we live. As usual, we would have gotten nowhere without our team of wonderful colleagues in the building especially our IT team who enabled this hybrid event to run so smoothly. My thanks go to my ever present Head of the President's Private office, Patrick Titun, and my advisor, Rachael Kondak for all their precious assistance and support. In particular I would like to warmly thank and express my admiration for our colleague Valerie Schwartz who in her kind, cheerful and ever efficient manner navigated all the practical details. I would also like to thank Tatiana Kirsanova, my personal assistant Terry Journiac, the interpreters and our sanitary cleaning service for their valuable help throughout the day.

Today, celebrating the Convention's 70th Anniversary, we have reviewed the past, assessed the present and attempted to predict the future. Allow me finally to thank the three other former Presidents who moderated with their characteristic statesmanship, Presidents Jean Paul-Costa, Dean Spielmann and Guido Raimondi, who all three, along with Alexander Sicilianos, have marked the history of the Court in their own way and are a constant source of inspiration for my own service as your current President. I also warmly thank my friends Vice-President Jon Fridrik Kjolbro and Section President Lemmens for their moderation today. The speakers, who all deserve our immense gratitude, today delivered comprehensive and high-quality interventions which will be compiled for publication.

Dear guests, dear friends, I close as I began this morning. The constellation of human rights and fundamental freedoms encompassed by the Convention has seldom if ever been as important as

now, at this very moment. On behalf of the European Court of Human Rights, it is my hope that this conference will be remembered as reaffirming on this, the Convention's 70th anniversary, the determination, the intention, indeed the firm resolve of the current Guardians of the Convention, to continue giving life and force to the Convention's fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights.