

Speech by Theodoros Rousopoulos, PACE President

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Artificial Intelligence and Europe's Democratic Responsibility

Mr Speaker of the House of Commons,

Mr Deputy Secretary General, dear Bjørn,

Mr Commissioner,

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to be here at Westminster — a place that stands for more than institutions.

It stands for the enduring responsibility of politics toward the power entrusted to it.

I would like to thank warmly you Mr Speaker, the United Kingdom delegation and Lord Jones for your hospitality and for our close and constructive cooperation.

I would like to express my deep condolences to the families of the victims following the tragic shooting that happened yesterday in Australia.

Let me begin with a myth that has accompanied European thought for centuries: Prometheus.

Not as a story about fire, but as a reminder of political responsibility.

Fire was power.

And power always required judgment.

Artificial Intelligence is the power of our time.

Not because it is technologically impressive, but because it reaches deeply into public life:

into how we inform ourselves, how we persuade, how we trust.

Fake news.

Deepfakes.

Automated, targeted disinformation.

These are no longer marginal phenomena.

They are structural risks.

Trust — the very foundation of any democracy — can now be eroded faster than it can be rebuilt.

And once trust is lost, institutions weaken, dialogue collapses, and polarisation fills the space.

For the first time in history, as Yuval Noah Harari recently has observed, humanity has created something that can make decisions, learn, persuade, and generate narratives — without human consciousness.

We are not speaking about technologies like the printing press or steam power.

Those were tools that amplified human will.

We are speaking about non-human entities with real capacity for influence.

The greatest danger here is not a dramatic catastrophe.

It is something slower.

And far more silent.

It is the gradual transformation of human beings into predictable, manipulable — and ultimately expendable — decision-makers.

A loss of autonomy.

A loss of judgment.

And, ultimately, a loss of meaning.

We cannot “program” values such as human dignity, freedom, or justice.

Artificial Intelligence can optimise objectives.

But it cannot know why those objectives have value.

If that distinction is lost, the problem will not be technological.

It will be political.

And here comes the Political responsibility and the role of our Parliaments.

Parliaments cannot be passive observers of this transition.

They must remain spaces of human judgment and democratic accountability.

At the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, I have asked the relevant department to work on the creation of a programme using AI tools, so that members, experts, and citizens can access our decisions more easily and more quickly.

We are not replacing democratic processes.

We are supporting them.

Making them more transparent.

And more accessible.

Recently, Andorra presented to the Assembly a particularly interesting example of how the new AI Convention can be implemented in practice — showing how principles can be translated into concrete parliamentary action.

This is the benchmark.

Technology in the service of representation — not its substitute.

Europe possesses a unique institutional capital:

the European Convention on Human Rights,

the rule of law,

and the principle of human dignity as a non-negotiable value.

On this foundation, the first legally binding international Convention on Artificial Intelligence was adopted last year within the framework of the Council of Europe.

Its success, however, will not be judged by its text.

It will be judged by Parliaments.

Just last week, Australia announced a ban on the use of social media for those under the age of sixteen.

I understand the concerns that led to this decision.

However, personally, I have serious reservations as to whether a blanket ban can produce the desired results.

Every political act begins with an ideological gesture — a choice of values.

The challenge is not to avoid that choice,

but to make it consciously, transparently, and through democratic dialogue.

Prohibition alone rarely cultivates responsibility.

More often, it cultivates the opposite.

The myth of Prometheus reminds us that knowledge without responsibility becomes a burden.

Today, however, we are not chained to a rock.

We still have the ability — and the duty — to choose.

If we safeguard human dignity,

if we keep political responsibility in human hands,

if we use technology to strengthen — rather than replace — democracy,

then Artificial Intelligence will not determine our future.

We will.

Thank you.