

Speaking points

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Seminar: "Crimes Against Humanity – Advancing Towards a Dedicated
International Convention"

Strasbourg (hybrid), 26 September 2025

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

- First of all, a heartfelt thank you to our distinguished moderator, wonderful speakers and participants. It has been truly insightful to listen to all your interventions, as well as to the thought-provoking discussions these prompted.
- We shall make all interventions as well as a summary of debates available online.
- Deuxièmement, je tiens à remercier la délégation de la Suisse. Cher Franz, un grand merci pour toujours être si proactif afin de porter à notre attention ces questions très pressantes et émergentes du droit international public.
- The effort to draft a crimes against humanity convention is more than a technical legal exercise — it is a collective commitment to closing one of the last gaps in international criminal law.

- Over the past decades, the world has seen treaties on genocide and on war crimes, yet crimes against humanity — acts that shock the conscience of humankind — have lacked a comprehensive, binding framework. This normative gap undermines the ability to respond effectively and consistently when such atrocities occur. The work begun by the International Law Commission and carried forward in the United Nations General Assembly's Sixth Committee represents a historic opportunity to change that.
- The discussions we have heard today underscore both the promise and the complexity of this project. Questions about definitions, about how best to reflect evolving human rights norms, and about how to balance clarity with inclusivity are not obstacles — they are signs of a treaty being forged with care.
- As we move from deliberation toward negotiation, let us keep in mind that the goal is not only to create a new legal instrument, but to reaffirm our shared humanity — to ensure that the gravest crimes never go unanswered, and that those who endure them are never invisible.
- Here, at the Council of Europe, international justice is at the core of our activities. In this context, I would like to highlight three ongoing efforts which can be seen in parallel or synergy with the work we are discussing here today.

- First, the ongoing work in relation to the establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine.
- Second, the third Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters was opened for signature in Valletta (Malta) only last week. The 1959 convention is applied well beyond Europe and includes among its contracting parties Chile, Israel, Korea and Mongolia.
- Third, in December, the new Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law will be opened for signature. This convention is the first international legally binding instrument to address environmental crime, covering a broad range of criminal acts including 'ecocide' not by name but in substance, crimes that aggravate the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.
- As I conclude, I wish to extend my thanks again to all who made this event possible — to our distinguished speakers for sharing their expertise, to Chiara for guiding the discussions with skill and sensitivity, and to the many participants who contributed their perspectives with such interest.