

## CLOSING REMARKS BY Mr. JAN KLEIJSEN

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Šibenik, 16 October 2018

- **Thank the Croatian authorities, notably Minister of Justice and his staff**, for hosting an exceptional event and for their generous hospitality. Over 250 participants from virtually all Continents of the world gathered here in the beautiful city of Šibenik. This was truly a global event. The event was full of very rich and lively discussions, but also a multitude of bilateral contacts. This is also why these events are so important: they build bridges across countries and institutions.
- It is very hard to capture in a few minutes the great discussions that took place during the past day and a half, but I will try to take up the challenge and share with you a few take-aways.
- **Strong political will is needed to combat corruption.** The strong representation at political level at this Conference is a tangible sign of the international commitment of all GRECO member states to prevent and combat corruption. It is now essential to translate this will in concrete reforms at a national level, thus better complying with GRECO recommendations. Think global, act local...
- **There cannot be an effective fight against corruption without an independent judiciary.** We are witnessing a number of regressions in this area across Europe. GRECO is and will continue to remain vigilant and raise the “yellow” card whenever it feels that our standards are being put at risk.
- **Preventive corruption is key.** We need to raise high barriers against corruption, not least to ensure good reputation and high level of trust in all sectors of the State, including law enforcement and government, the topics of GRECO’s 5<sup>th</sup> evaluation round. Reputation is hard to gain and easy to lose so it is in everyone’s interest to cherish it. Measures to manage conflicts of interest, regulations on revolving doors and post-employment restrictions, on gifts, the development and enforcements of codes of conducts, asset declarations are some examples of effective preventive measures.
- **Stopping corruption starts from the “kindergarten”.** Anti-corruption education is crucial to shape responsible citizens of tomorrow. However, as adults in today’s world, we are called upon to lead by example. If children see us fail in our integrity, why should they be different? GRECO Secretariat is working with our colleagues in the Education sector and an international NGO – the European Federation of Schools (FEDE) – to develop an ambitious toolkit on anti-corruption education to be shared with all schools on our continent. Our challenge is to have all schools organise at least one hour of anticorruption education in each classroom, every year.
- **A free and independent media plays a crucial role in preventing and combating corruption.** Shedding light on and uncovering corruption practices and integrity failings is a powerful tool

in changing societies' attitudes and mentalities. Each new case revealed makes a difference. The circle of silence and impunity needs to be broken.

- **One year by the day from the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia**, we must honour the memory, the work, the courage of Ms. Caruana Galizia and all the other journalists. We are still waiting to know who did it and why, and who ordered the murder. The clock is ticking...
- **The media landscape is indicative of the state of democracy in a country.** The economic dimension of media landscape and the level of concentration in the media market have direct repercussions on the way journalists work. The transparency of media ownership is a powerful tool to tackle corruption in the media industry and should be actively promoted, in law and in practice. Initiatives such as Media Ownership Monitor deserve to be actively supported and expanded.
- **As we heard this morning, national anti-corruption agencies play an essential role in preventing and combating corruption.** I am very glad to see many of them here at this meeting. While they are diverse in their nature, competences and structures, they pursue a common aim of preventing and combating corruption. I am very happy that 17 of them have just signed a Declaration committing to working more closely together. The platform they have just created should be as concrete as possible. This is international cooperation at its best.
- **The past 20 years have seen important progress in the fight against corruption.** I heard and I am proud of the praise all of you have given to GRECO's work. Yet, attitudes and societal norms have changed. We thus need to adjust our policies and our standards to the changing times. GRECO's new Rule 34 goes in this direction. In addition, I am glad that the question was raised as to whether our over 20 years old anti-corruption standards are still actual. While GRECO has been innovative in interpreting in a modern way the standards we have, I also heard calls for an Additional Protocol to the Criminal Law Convention to tackle "grand corruption". It is too early to say whether this idea will be pursued, but I note that it was raised.
- **In the same vein, I am glad that the issue of blockchain, crypto-currency and artificial intelligence – or AI - was raised.** These developments can't be ignored. We need to use their "good side" as key law enforcement tools to help us detect corruption. At the Council of Europe we are working hard to ensure that AI-developments are respectful of the CoE Human Rights and the Rule of Law standards and I am grateful to the upcoming Finnish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the CoE for its focus on AI. Perhaps anti-corruption could be the bridge between the Croatian and the Finnish Chairmanships in the area of Artificial Intelligence.
- I would like to thank the Croatian Minister and his staff for their very warm hospitality, the CoE staff for their work, and everyone for your active participation in this event which made it a success. I would also like to thank the interpreters without whom we couldn't communicate as smoothly as we have. I wish you all a safe journey home.