

4th Parliamentary Summit of the International Crimea Platform

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Address by Theodoros Rousopoulos
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Dear Colleagues,

I often speak about dignity as the word that contains the whole meaning of democracy — freedom, equality, human rights.

And a few days ago, President Zelensky spoke of the hardest dilemma: the choice between preserving dignity and risking the loss of a powerful ally. This is not only Ukraine's dilemma. It is our common question: what is dignified?

History gives us a lens.

In the Dialogue of the Athenians and the Melians (25 centuries ago, as Thucydides recorded), the Athenians said: "The strong do what they can." And the Melians replied: "We stand by justice, even if we stand alone." And although the island fell, their answer became a moral compass across centuries.

Ukraine today stands not as Melos stood — isolated — but surrounded by nations that recognize that dignity is not a poetic ornament; it is the core of the international order.

It is what tells us that borders cannot be erased and that people cannot be uprooted.

Some may say it is easy for us, speaking from far away, to invoke dignity while an entire nation suffers the daily reality of war.

But that is exactly why we must continue supporting Ukraine — and why we must persuade our American friends that Russia will not stop even if it gets what it wants today. It will not end with Crimea or with the territories seized through aggression.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which I have the honour to lead, stood alone when we first proposed an international tribunal.

Today, many states stand with us. And when we launched the Register of Damage, no one expected that one year later we would already have more than 160,000 documented claims.

When we began the effort to return the abducted children, few imagined that 1,600 would already be back home.

Much remains to be done. But the essential point is this: we must not allow the invitation of an authoritarian leader to pass as if nothing has happened. Because if that happens, it will not be only Ukrainians facing the dilemma of dignity — it will be the entire thinking, civilised world.