

**Ceremony “United for Ukraine”
organised by the Presidency of Luxembourg
of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**

24 February 2025, Strasbourg

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

Dear Chair of the Committee of Ministers,

Dear Secretary General,

Dear Ambassador Tarasyuk, dear Borys,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

For the 3rd time, we gather here today under the Ukrainian flags to express and reaffirm our solidarity with Ukraine and its people fighting the brutal Russian aggression, to remember all the victims (military and civilians) who perished in this fight and to reassert our resolve and determination to stand by and with Ukraine for as long as it takes.

This time, the news carries a glimmer of hope — a hope for peace. Yet, let us remind ourselves: peace must not only be lasting; it must be **just**.

Justice for Ukraine has been at the heart of the Council of Europe’s mission over these past three years. And today, with the controversies that surround possible peace talks, more than ever, we must stand firm in upholding it. Because Europe’s commitment to a just peace in Ukraine **is not just an act of solidarity** — it is a continuation of a **tradition** deeply embedded in our

continent: the tradition of living in the rules-based order, tradition of abiding to international law and justice, born right here, in Europe.

Let me take you back to the 17th century, when Hugo Grotius, a **Dutch** scholar, referred to as the father of international law, laid down principles that remain the cornerstone of international justice today.

Or to the era of **the European Enlightenment**, when the idea of the rule of law took root in Europe and irreversibly reshaped legal traditions far beyond our borders.

It was the unbearable suffering witnessed by the **Swiss** humanitarian **Henry Dunant at the Solferino** battlefield that gave birth to international humanitarian law.

And then, **the Nuremberg Principles**, forged in the aftermath of one of the darkest chapters of human history. Just weeks ago, we listened to the haunting testimony of a Buchenwald survivor — a man who, for 80 years, could not bring himself to speak of his mother's final glance before she was taken from him.

It was on European soil that the first permanent legal institution was established — the institution that paved the way for the International Court of Justice, and the International Criminal Court, based in the Hague close to the place where Hugo Grotius created the foundations of international law.

This history — our history — reminds us, Ladies and Gentlemen, that our commitment to **just peace** was not born in the vacuum. It was forged in the fires of war, out of the pain and suffering that once divided our continent. It is because of this past that we stand here today, defending the principle of just peace — not as a mere ideal, but as a fundamental part of our shared European story.

The story of our nations, our families, our ancestors.

What is reasonable must be international.

What is international must be law.

And what is law must be enforced.

These words by Grotius, echoing from centuries past, still hold true today.

By standing with Ukraine, we are standing for these very principles. We affirm that just peace is not a noble declaration but a concrete necessity — one built upon the lessons of our painful past, and one upon which our shared future must rest.