Gouvernement Princier
PRINCIPAUTÉ DE MONACO

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

THE SAINT-DENIS CONVENTION: A FIRST DECADE OF SUCCESS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Conference to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Convention

3 November 2026 (4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.)

Grimaldi Forum, Camille Blanc Auditorium

Closing speech by Rodrigo Cavaleiro

Chair of the Saint-Denis Committee

Your Excellencies,
Ministers,
Distinguished guests,
Dear colleagues and friends,

Let me begin by warmly thanking the authorities of the Principality of Monaco for hosting us today, and for bringing together this remarkable community to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Saint-Denis Convention.

Anniversaries invite us to look back. But their real value lies in helping us decide how we want to move forward.

Ten years ago, the Saint-Denis Convention expressed an idea that was both simple and transformative: people do not attend a sporting event merely to enter a secure venue. They come to participate, to support, to celebrate and to feel that they belong. Our responsibility is therefore not limited to preventing violence or disorder. It is to ensure that every person can experience sport in conditions that are safe, secure, welcoming, inclusive and respectful of human dignity.

This is what makes the Convention distinctive. It understands that safety, security and service are not separate agendas, and certainly not competing priorities. They are three interdependent pillars of the same integrated approach. If one is neglected, the whole system becomes weaker.

During these years — and particularly through my experience within this Committee and during monitoring visits — I have seen how relevant this approach remains. I have seen advanced systems that continue to question themselves

and learn. I have also seen how far an internationally agreed principle must travel before it becomes reality: in national policy, local coordination, police operations, steward training and the way supporters are welcomed.

That journey from standards to practice must remain at the centre of our work.

The Committee has already adopted two multi-annual policy strategies: the first for 2021–2025 and our current Strategy for 2026–2029. Together, they provide continuity across five enduring priorities: monitoring, effective implementation and standard-setting, the institutional role of the Committee, international partnerships, and technical assistance.

But a strategy is valuable only if it produces change.

Monitoring must therefore remain at the heart of our mandate. Our visits, questionnaires, thematic studies and evaluations of major tournaments are not inspections for their own sake. They are based on peer review, cooperation and trust. Their purpose is to identify strengths, recognise good practice and help countries address gaps before those gaps become failures.

There is still much to do to ensure that the Convention is fully implemented from national to local level. In particular, we must continue to strengthen the safety and service pillars so that they achieve the necessary balance with security, which has benefited from many years of effective international police cooperation.

We need strong security. But security alone does not create a safe event. Nor does it create a welcoming one.

A supporter who is treated with dignity is more likely to cooperate. A well-trained steward can prevent a minor difficulty from becoming a serious incident. An accessible venue is not only a better venue; it is also a safer one. Service is therefore not an optional addition. It is part of effective risk management and of a human-rights-based approach to sport.

Monitoring must also lead more consistently to tangible assistance. When a visit identifies a gap, the next question cannot simply be, “What did we find?” It must be, “What can we do together to improve it?”

The action plans that follow monitoring visits should become living instruments for reform, with clear ownership, realistic priorities and meaningful follow-up. Technical assistance should respond directly to the needs identified and help States transform recommendations into sustainable practice.

Standard-setting will also remain one of our essential responsibilities. During the past decade, the Committee has addressed persistent and emerging challenges, from pyrotechnics and collective bans to policing, crowd management, stewarding, safety and service.

As new challenges arise, our standards must continue to evolve while remaining anchored in the values of the Council of Europe. Human rights, gender equality, accessibility and the fight against racism, hate speech and discrimination cannot

be additional chapters attached to our technical work. They must be present throughout it.

The integrated multi-agency approach is the ethos of the Convention, and the composition of our Committee should reflect that principle. Governments cannot deliver safe, secure and welcoming sporting events alone. Police services, municipalities, sports organisations, clubs, leagues, supporters, professionals and civil society all hold part of the knowledge — and part of the responsibility.

This is why the growing diversity of our Committee is so important. State Parties sit alongside State and non-State observers from policing, sport, supporter organisations, professional bodies and international institutions. This diversity improves the quality of our decisions by combining national policy with operational and grassroots experience. It also helps us understand how the experience of sporting events may differ according to gender, age, disability or background.

The Convention is open to the world. It is not restricted to the member States of the Council of Europe, and its growing international reach should encourage us to be even more ambitious.

The pace of ratification during the first decade has been remarkable — approximately one ratification every three months — and the ratifications we celebrate today show that this momentum continues. We are moving steadily towards universal ratification among the Council of Europe member States and towards completing the transition from the 1985 Convention.

But our horizon must extend beyond Europe. Our renewed cooperation with Morocco and Tunisia demonstrates the relevance of the Convention across regions. At the same time, partnerships with sports organisations, the European Union, United Nations agencies and other regional organisations can consolidate the Committee as the international reference platform for safety, security and service at sporting events.

As our membership, partnerships and responsibilities grow, we must also recognise a fundamental reality: ambition must be matched by capacity.

The achievements of the past decade were made possible not only by the commitment of States, observers and experts, but also by the sustained work of the Secretariat. It ensures continuity between meetings, supports monitoring, prepares standards, maintains institutional relationships and turns the Committee’s decisions into practical results.

Much of this work takes place away from public view, but it is indispensable.

If we want monitoring to be followed by meaningful assistance, new members to be properly supported and our standards to respond credibly to emerging challenges, then the Committee and its Secretariat must have stable, adequate and fairly allocated resources.

This is not an administrative detail. It is a condition for effectiveness and credibility.

Every ratification creates legitimate expectations. Every monitoring visit creates a responsibility to follow up. Every recommendation must be understood and implemented. Investing in the capacity of the Committee and its Secretariat is therefore an investment in safer events, stronger institutions and better international cooperation. It is what will allow us to build on the achievements of the first decade rather than simply celebrate them.

Dear friends,

Our work is technical, but its ultimate purpose is profoundly human — and profoundly democratic.

A stadium is society in concentrated form. It brings together people of different generations, origins, beliefs and social backgrounds. It produces strong emotions, visible identities and intense loyalties. This is precisely why sport can become a place of confrontation and exclusion — but also why it can be one of the most powerful places for learning coexistence.

At a time when Europe and other regions are again confronting polarisation, extremism, intolerance, hate speech and increasing pressure on democratic institutions, we should not underestimate what is at stake.

Sport can show that passionate disagreement does not require hatred; that an opponent is not an enemy; that rules apply equally; and that people can share the same space without surrendering their identity.

These are sporting values, but they are also democratic values: dignity, equality, respect, fairness, solidarity, inclusion, responsibility and dialogue.

We must therefore protect sport from violence, discrimination, racism, hatred and manipulation — not only because they threaten spectators and participants, but because they undermine sport’s capacity to unite society.

Our task for the next decade is to ensure that sport remains an ambassador for these values, rather than becoming an amplifier of the divisions around it.

This requires courage to examine our shortcomings, humility to learn from one another, and determination to turn common principles into daily practice. It also requires us to give this Convention, this Committee and its Secretariat the means needed to fulfil their mission.

Ten years ago, the Saint-Denis Convention gave us a shared vision. Today, our responsibility is to give that vision lasting effect.

If we protect sport as a place of dignity, inclusion and democratic coexistence, sport can help us protect the societies in which we wish to live.

That is the promise of the Saint-Denis Convention.

And that must be our ambition for the next ten years. Thank you.