

**Speech by Mr Thorbjørn Jagland at the high-level seminar on public debate as a tool for the governance of new technologies**

**Strasbourg, 4 June 2019**

Friends,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this high level seminar.

The priority placed on it by the French Presidency of our Committee of Ministers tells a clear story.

Encouraging public debate on bioethical questions has long been a priority of the French authorities.

And the Council of Europe has a proud record of action to advance human rights in biomedicine:

Notably through our Oviedo Convention, which has become a reference not only for the European Court of Human Rights, but around the world.

Applying that treaty will help states to ensure that new technologies uphold human rights, rather than harm them.

But in a fast-changing world, there is an urgent need to discuss with stakeholders how we can all help to make that happen.

As part of the process, from 2020 our Committee on Bioethics will begin a programme of active engagement with member states.

This will include discussion of the ways in which they can encourage meaningful public debate as a tool for the governance of new technologies.

To accompany this, we will also launch a new practical guide on public debate in the biomedical field, aimed specifically at public authorities.

Ultimately, this is about international organisations, national authorities and the general public having the opportunity to discuss ethical and human rights issues raised by new technologies, and ensure that biomedicine lives up to its potential protecting our human rights.

I hope that we can count on your support, and I wish you a successful seminar.