

**Address of the President of the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic
(the 30th Anniversary of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine)**

Thirty years ago, in October 1996, the Constitutional Court of Ukraine began its work. Thirty years is not a long time in the life of a nation. But for a young democracy, it is an entire era. It is the era in which a constitutional court had to prove, case by case, decision by decision, that a constitution is not merely a piece of paper. It is a promise that power has limits, and that every person stands under the protection of the constitution.

On behalf of the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic, and on my own behalf, I extend to you my warmest congratulations on this anniversary.

Our two courts have shared a similar hope. We emerged from decades in which the very idea of constitutional review was strange, even suspicious, to the rule-of-law states we now serve. We had to build, almost from the ground, the doctrines, the institutional culture, and above all the trust that constitutional justice requires. We did not build them alone. Over these thirty years, Czech and Ukrainian judges have met with many other colleagues from abroad, argued, learned one from another, and well - also encouraged each other. That cooperation has not been a ceremonial gesture. It is a working friendship between institutions that face, in different regions, the same questions: how to protect the individual against the state, how to keep power accountable, and how to do so without ever losing the trust of the people we serve?

We share, I believe, a common interest. It is not simply delivering correct judgments. It is to keep alive, in societies still shaped by the memory of unfreedom, the conviction that human dignity and fundamental rights are not gifts from the state but something that limits its powers. Every generation of judges must earn that conviction anew. Yours has earned it under circumstances that no other constitutional court in Europe has faced in living memory.

The role of constitutional courts has never been more tested than today. Democracies are challenged by populism, by the erosion of institutional trust, and by forces that reject the very premise of the rule of law. In such times, constitutional courts shall not be a piece of decoration. They are among the last guarantors that a state remains what its constitution says it to be, even when everything else is under pressure. Ukraine has shown, in the most demanding way imaginable, what that guarantee means in practice. Your Court has continued to sit, to deliberate, and to decide, while your country defends its very existence. That is not a small achievement. It is extraordinary.

We know that some of your sessions have taken place under the sound of air raid sirens. We know that some of your colleagues must work from shelters rather than courtrooms. And still, the Constitutional Court of Ukraine has kept working. Kept judging. Kept fulfilling its mission, even in war.

So, allow me please to close not only with congratulations, but with a wish. I and my colleagues - Justices of the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic, we all hope that the war ends soon. We hope that the day comes quickly and Ukrainian judges no longer need to hide themselves from enemy missiles but can simply do what judges are supposed to do: read the petitions, weigh the arguments, and protect the people who ask for protection. Until that day, and after it, please know that the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic stands behind you. We admire your resilience. We value your friendship. And we are, without reservation, on your side.

Congratulations on thirty years of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine. May the next thirty years be built in peace.

With respect and solidarity,

Josef Baxa

President of the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic