

On democracy and the self-determination of people

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

I am Henrik Clausen, representing Wiener Akademikerbund in Austria. The Annotated Agenda for this session rightly encourages democracy as the only system of government for our nations, and we can wholeheartedly agree with this. Democracy means "Rule of the People" - no more, no less.

This also means that national sovereignty is the ultimate expression of democracy, and that the people of a nation ultimately has the sovereign right to rule the country, for better or for worse. Without a 'Demos', there can be no true democracy.

We face a crisis of confidence, with multiple challenges to democracy and the sovereignty of the people. One challenge is over-zealous interpretation of international conventions, another is the mass migration into our countries.

An important problem here is that many migrants lack respect for the law of the land that they migrate to, and for the democratic process as such. Specifically, Islamic doctrine rejects the legitimacy of "man-made law", claiming that Islamic law (Sharia) is the only permissible legal system, for all mankind. This is fundamentally incompatible with democracy and human rights.

These inalienable rights are intrinsic to human nature. Governments are instituted among men to secure these rights, deriving their just rights from the consent of the government. This is the basis for trust in and legitimacy of democratic institutions. When governments fail to secure the rights of the citizens, trust and legitimacy naturally diminishes.

In order to restore trust in politicians and public office holders, governments need to focus more on protecting the freedoms of citizens than to regulate them. This means abolishing restrictions like blasphemy laws, hate speech laws and other limits to freedom of expression, and to abstain from controlling or subsidizing the media.

Also urgently needed is a response to Islamists who openly discourage Muslims from participating in democracy, or otherwise denigrate democracy and promote Sharia. This open challenge needs to be met based on the rule of law and the documented incompatibility of Sharia and democracy.

In order to preventing aggressive nationalism, Wiener Akademikerbund recommends:

- That blasphemy laws and other meaningless regulations be abolished.
- That governments and relevant authorities counter the threat from those promoting Sharia.
- That the sovereignty of the people over international conventions be reasserted.