

S P E E C H

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

RULE OF LAW PROGRAM
SOUTH EAST EUROPE
THORSTEN GEISLER

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One World Romania 2013 – For a better karma!

SPEECH HELD AT THE OPENING OF THE 6. INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL ONE WORLD ROMANIA 2013 (11-17 MARCH), CINEMA PATRIA, BUCHAREST, 11 MARCH 2013.

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the official opening of this year's international human rights documentary film festival on behalf of the Rule of Law Program South East Europe of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. Also this year we are happy and proud to be the main partner of "ONE WORLD ROMANIA". The promotion of the protection of human rights all around the world is a core mission of our foundation. As Christian Democrats we believe that human rights are universal, and inalienable, interdependent and indivisible.

Many countries have committed themselves to respecting human rights either by signing international conventions or by national legislation. The reality, however, is different. Maplecroft's Human Rights Index 2012 paints a grim picture of human rights in countries worldwide. In fact, in its 5th consecutive year the index paints a continuously worsening landscape for human rights worldwide. Over 48 % of the assessed 197 countries are at an "extreme" or "high" risk of human rights violations.

In the films that will be screened in the context of this festival you will be confronted with a lot of violence and hatred. Hate is a powerful emotion. This mental venom can pollute your spirit and poison

your soul. While hate can be directed at almost anything, the most destructive is hatred towards other people.

Very often hate is not directed against individuals but against all those who belong to an ethnic, religious or social minority. Anyone who deviates in any perceived way from the norm of a population may become subject to coarse or subtle forms of social exclusion. The Holocaust stands out as the most criminally extreme example in this respect – when social exclusion was replaced by physical annihilation.

Non-discrimination has now become a cross-cutting principle in international human rights law, the principle is present in all the major human rights treaties and provides the central theme of several important international human rights conventions.

Moreover, societies that block people from rights, opportunities and resources lose human resources. As our economies are more and more powered by creativity, no society can afford to lose talent. In fact creativity, that is the ability to create meaningful new forms has become the decisive source of competitive advantage. In virtually every industry, from cars to fashion, food products and information,

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the winners in the long run are those who can create and keep creating. The social exclusion of minorities leads to a loss of talent and thus to a loss of competitiveness and the loss of competitiveness leads to less wealth for a society as a whole.

Therefore it is in everybody's best self-interest to promote tolerance and diversity and to oppose those who want to marginalise minorities by spreading prejudice and intolerance or worse hatred against minorities.

Why is hatred so wide-spread? The French philosopher Rene Descartes gives the answer: "It is easy to hate and it is difficult to love. This is how the whole scheme of things works. All good things are difficult to achieve and bad things are very easy to get."

Good things are difficult to achieve. But if we wish to live in a fair and just society in which human and minority rights are respected every effort that is necessary to achieve this goal will be rewarded. Human rights entail rights and obligations. States assume obligations and duties under international law to respect, to fulfil human rights. At the individual level, while we are entitled to our human rights, we are also obliged to respect the human rights of others and this means that we also fight all forms of discrimination and social exclusion.

I hope you will enjoy this festival and take home many new ideas and impressions and will feel encouraged because you will see that many share the values that you and I stand for.

Let me thank all those who organized this festival, let me also thank our partners and last but not least the media which will ensure that the message that is sent out from this festival can be heard in the whole country.

I wish "One World Romania 2013" every possible success.