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7th ICHL-2021

The 7th International Conference on Humanity and Law 2021

Tirana, May 27, 2021

**Welcome Speech of the Conference Co-Chair Associate Professor Rahim
OMBASHI**

OPENING REMARKS AND PLENARY SESSION

Honorable Professor Ferdinand GJANA, Rector of University College "Beder"

Honorable Professor Mohamed ALBAILI, former Rector of the University of the United Arab Emirates and President of the International Organization "Educators without Borders", Geneva

Honorable Prof. Bruno GIARDINA, Rector of the Catholic University "Zoja e Këshillit të Mirë"

Honorable Prof. Kseanela SOTIROFSKI, Rector of "Aleksander Moisiu" University of Durres

Honorable Assoc. Prof. Elvira FETAHU, Vice Rector of "Aleksandër Xhuvani" University of Elbasan

The International Conference on Humanities and Law (7th-ICHL), which begins today, takes place two years after the successful organization of the 6th-ICH. University College "Bedër", in these two academic years has grown and further improved, making sustainable changes not only in its structure, but especially in improving the quality of academic staff. Its positive performance is clearly reflected in the quality achievements from the students.

The 7th-ICHL with the topic: "Perspectives on COVID-19: Challenges, Solutions and Opportunities" was organized in a different context this year. It was drafted, planned and implemented during the difficult period of the COVID-19 pandemic that was a tough battle for the human society at this century. During the twentieth century the society also faced three other battles: World War I, World War II, and the Cold War, which covered the entire second half of that century and which ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall. After the clash of ideologies came to an end, which for long had divided the world into two antagonistic camps, it was believed that the world would use communication and agreements in order not to use the violence again.

Even Samuel Huntington's ominous prediction that there would be a clash of civilizations (1996) proved to have no basis as there were no ideological conflicts. When everyone was talking about global peace, suddenly the humanity was under threat by the COVID-19 pandemic. The world will not forget December 8, 2019. Three months later, on March 8, 2020, the COVID 19 virus first appeared in Albania. The long and tiring wait weakened our small country by wounding his body and soul causing irreparable loss.

During the 'Lockdown' period, the residents not only became isolated in their family, but they were also locked within themselves. Anxiety could be read in everyone's eyes and sometimes there was a state of panic.

This condition can be better evidenced by the vocabulary that enriched the lexicon and the words with direct meaning, the lexicon from various fields of human activity and international expressions: Coronavirus (Covid-19), quarantine, 'Lockdown', self-isolation, virus, vascular complications, tests, intubation, asymptomatic condition, people tested positive, tested negative, Pfizer / BioNtech vaccines, AstraZeneca, Russian, Chinese vaccines, etc.

The school switched to online courses leaving the educational institutions in the country silent and empty. Unemployment during the pandemic was increased and that is confirmed by INSTAT in official statistics. According to the figures, during 2020 a total of 43 thousand became unemployed and that means that unemployment increased by 3.4%. At the end of 2020 there were a total of 1.23 million employees in the country, from 1.27 million at the end

of 2019. An employment expert interpreted the INSTAT figures as a negative result that was expected:

"2020 ended with an expected negative result. According my research until the end of the last year, given the high number of informal or undeclared self-employed workers, we had over 100,000 unemployed people."

Loss of life were several times higher than before the COVID-19.

After the initial suddenness and confusion, the world community invited health research institutions to immediately implement the scientific findings in order to prevent a human catastrophe. In this sad reality, Albania did not give up. For the first time in the centuries-old history, the Albanian citizens did not face this world tragedy alone. Albanians did not face this battle alone or as a family and they were not isolated, because they had the support of institutions, organizations, and the state.

Health and education institutions, state police, service workers... were at the front of this battle and their efforts were significantly supported by the discovery of some vaccines in several countries. Then the patience of everyone was rewarded and the faith and hope was strengthened. The other side of the coin is that health workers, teachers, lecturers..., lost their lives. But even in these conditions, the citizens did not feel like losers.

The individuals had to think deeply as there was a lack of social life due social distancing and the communication was mainly realized through the Internet.

"A single person can philosophize, -Socrates claims. "Two people talk, and a group of people - make noise."

The society that was under attack gave everyone the opportunity to turn the losses into an added experience. The aggressive reality encouraged and strengthened the sensitivity of the citizens who were still healthy and protected from the pandemic, but at the same time they were suffering for others: his family, neighbor, colleague, friend or someone he had never met, who was being treated from COVID-19 or suffered from its consequences:

"Only those who share the same feeling can understand each other and not those who speak the same language," says the wise Rumi.

Being not only geographically between the West and the East, the whole Balkans, especially the Western Balkans, faced dubious and false offline and online information, which was spread with the infodemic speed. The public in this region is "bombarded" persistently so much by dubious informations, so that it is often difficult to understand the difference between fake news and propaganda, biased stories or credible information. Media coverage and public information during a health crisis is always a challenge, but in the context of a global pandemic, in the age of the internet, filtering information becomes even more difficult.

Nowadays there is already more poverty and unemployment, while services, education and hospitals are in danger of deteriorating. These conditions encourage the emergence of elements of a political system that Nic Cheeseman, Eloise Bertrand, and Sa'eed Husaini call neo-patrimonialism. (*A Dictionary of African Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2019)

Under the lack of social life, hate speech has penetrated all media platforms introducing a complex issue. In the context of the pandemic, it is important to note that there was a need for science journalism, which guarantees that you read the news as a fact-checker. Media education is a necessity and it should be first taught to the younger generations.

Under these abnormal conditions, it was natural that the topic of the conference would be: "Perspectives on COVID-19: Challenges, Solutions and Opportunities", which reflects the spirit of this period turning into a seductive slogan. Challenging the hard time, the conference began to attract researchers and scholars to be open to themselves, then to others, aiming to get closer and with a strong belief for the future. You can find solutions, believe in opportunities, and face challenges by sharing different points of view and critical argumentation. Everyone at University College Beder needed to complete the slogan in their own way.

We often say that with every difficulty there is relief. The slogan was also welcomed beyond our institution and some of those who had the opportunity joined us to finalize the ideas. The work for the conference continued uninterrupted, while life continued under "pandemic surveillance", and such a term proves that there is hope for the future, and therefore for the normalization of education. As Professor Mohamed Albaili, President for the International Organization "Educators without Borders", would have said, "challenges, solutions and opportunities have no limits".

The conference will be attended by about 150 participants from Albania and abroad. Among them there will be leaders of international organizations, academics and researchers with experience in the field of teacher trainings, assistance of students in need and directors of pre-university schools. The 7th-ICHL will be held in five sections and ten sessions. The research results and original findings will be conveyed through 55 articles, who will convey anti-COVID alternatives that will enrich the scientific and professional experience of those who will apply them.

As Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Law, I would like to express my highest consideration for your valuable contribution and wish you success. Since the biological battle made us understand the value of health, I wish you have a healthy and happy life!

Yours respectfully,

Assoc. Prof. Dr. RAHIM OMBASHI

Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Law