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ACA Europe

Speech on the occasion of the Centennial jubilee of the Supreme Administrative Court of Poland

Royal Castle, Warsaw, October 25th, 2022

Mr President of the Republic of Poland, Your Excellency,

Mr President of the Supreme Administrative Court of Poland,

Distinguished invited guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

it is a great pleasure to be invited to the festive ceremony on the centenary of the establishment of
the Supreme Administrative Court and an even greater honour to give an address in this historical
moment.

When celebrating an institution's centennial anniversary, it is interesting to have a look back at the
times when it was founded. How did the world and Poland look like in 1922? Have we learnt
anything? In the aftermath of World War One, borders of Eastern European countries had become
unstable. Having newly gained its independence, Poland entered into war with Soviet-Russia. The
war ended by the peace of Riga in 1921, where Poland received e.g. minor parts of western
Ukraine. Time does not allow to discuss the horrible history during World War Two (when the
work of the Supreme Administrative Tribunal was interrupted) and the decades after that, under the
Soviet Union influence. After liberating from communistic past, Poland joined the European Union
and the NATO.

Today Europe is, again, suffering from several crises. Covid-19 still emerges, but the cruel Russian war in Ukraine, violating international law and the rule-based world order, is the major concern, also with implications to energy supply, economy, etc. Poland has had a crucial role in supporting Ukraine and its people to oppose the unprovoked aggression. Whole Europe is grateful to Poland.

Mr President, I am aware of your degree of doctor of laws in the field of administrative law. As the future president of ACA Europe, the organization where I have learnt to know my friend president Chlebny, I would like to mention that ACA Europe is an international association composed of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the supreme administrative courts of the EU Member States. The work of ACA Europe focusses both on horizontal dialogue between national supreme administrative courts, and on vertical dialogue between these courts and the European Courts.

The Treaty of the European Union reflects a vision establishing a union among the peoples of Europe. Democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, including independent courts, are central values of the EU. These principles cannot flourish if they are not respected at the national level.

Ladies and gentlemen, the European Union is based on ideas of harmonization and mutual trust. If the authority of EU law is called into question, we will be losing sight of the very essence of the Union. The primacy of EU law is a core element of our common legal order.

I would like to quote President Koen Lenaerts' article in the jubilee edition of European Judiciary Review where he congratulates the Naczelny Sad Administracyjny and summarizes: "National administrative courts are vital for the development of EU law as they prevent public administrations from limiting EU rights arbitrarily." This "court has always taken very seriously its role as a guarantor of those rights, which is essential if the rule of law is to be upheld."

Especially during unstable times, as those we are facing now, it is of utmost importance that independent courts take a strong role in doing justice under the law, constitution, and international commitments. Trust in courts and legality creates cohesion in the society and promotes resilience. Together we shall build a strong European rule of law.

Mr President of the Republic, Mr President of the Supreme Administrative Court, thank you for the kind invitation here to the glorious Royal Palace. It was destroyed after the fall of the Warsaw Uprising in September 1944, when German sappers blasted the Castle walls, as a revenge for the Uprising. The Royal Castle is a symbol of the sovereignty of the Polish State.

I want to extend my sincere congratulations to the Supreme Administrative Court and wish the best success in its valuable work, having significance not only in Poland but in the whole European Union!