

Speech of Mikhail Galperin at the Plenary Session of the Global Lawyers Forum (China, Guangzhou, December 9, 2019)

Your Excellency Minister of Justice, distinguished guests, dear colleagues!

Thank you for the invitation to this Forum. On behalf of all Russian delegation, which includes prominent lawyers, as well as the President of the Bar, thank you for your hospitality.

Russia and China have rich history of almost 400 years of diplomatic relations and became the strategic partners. The thousands kilometers boarder between our two states is not just the boarder, but the line of cooperation. It is the infrastructure of cooperation, which includes ports, factories, bridges and roads. Just at the beginning of this month two Presidents opened the new major trans-border gas pipeline, so the new era of the Russian-Chinese energy cooperation began.

Our ministries also have the excellent record of cooperation at the justice sphere. We always welcome our Chinese friends to the St. Petersburg International Legal Forum.

We live at the era of “shifting the law”. We face challenges in the global world, including terrorism, extremism, cybercrimes, threat of the new arms race and many others. Law and lawyers should address these challenges effectively, discuss new legal instruments and approaches, taking into account that we all have common humanitarian and social values, but different legal systems and constitutional frameworks to implement these values.

Legal profession is also changing. Legaltech is pretending to become a reality. That is why people could ask us, do we need lawyers anymore, since rather court decisions could be drafted automatically? The answer is clearly yes.

Firstly, technologies could be developed fast, but human beings are the same as 10, 50, 100 or rather 1000 years ago. We always have the same needs: safe and comfortable life, good family, healthy children, clear view to the future and prosperity.

In any digitalization procedure we should always remember (it is especially true for the public sector lawyers) that we work not just for abstract businesses and markets,

but for millions of citizens with different level of education and incomes, different opinions and living in different places. Some of them for example would prefer paper certificate of property to the electronic one, would like to have something tangible in their hands, not virtual.

It is evidenced by the human history that any new technology (including, for example, electricity, railways, telephone or Internet) passes 3 stages of implementation: 1. Attraction, 2. Luxury, and 3. Mass product.

Some of the legal technologies are still attraction, some are already luxury. However, it is lawyers, who must explain people why this or that technology could make their lives better and safer, but not to enforce such technologies' application without users' will and clear understanding.

Secondly and finally, lawyers will never be under the risk to be replaced by robots, since law is not just technology, but also philosophy and ideology. We will not become legal robots until we remember that we are humans and act accordingly. Robot cannot believe to anything and share any values. It is our privilege, which we shall always remember about.

I wish you the successful conference, thank you for the attention!