



Closing remarks

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Giovanni Buttarelli

European Data Protection Supervisor

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Prepare for Star Wars.

There has been an awakening - have you felt it?

I am referring of course this Computers, Privacy and Data Protection (CPDP) conference and the power of ideas, innovation, frank and open exchanges of views.

Let me say that *The force is truly strong in this family*: The force which was strong in Caspar Bowden, to whom we paid a tribute in the last panel, is in many of the one thousand people who have passed through this building.

CPDP is now 9 years old.

It is approaching its adolescence.

Puberty beckons.

Who remembers what happens to you during puberty?

Your body grows, your weight increases, you accumulate more fat and muscle.

And you discover powers and functions which you never thought you had.

As the President of the European Parliament reminded us yesterday, the Internet has long ago lost its innocence.

CPDP has also lost its innocence - but that is not necessarily a bad thing.

It began as a one day event. This week it has been four days: 70 separate sessions over four days.

Starting on Tuesday with a clash of lightsabres between Peter Swire and Max Schrems and with an assembly of the Rebel Alliance - also known as the Privacy Camp annual civil society meeting.

There have even been calls for CPDP to provide a crèche, where the next generation of data protection Jedis can begin to learn to master the good side of the force.

When I had the privilege last year of giving the closing remarks to CPDP 2015, I described this event as 'the epicentre for creative ideas, sharp analysis and fierce debate on privacy and data protection.' I called it "a great international, democratic coffee shop".

This year, I would go further: CPDP is a vast parliament of diverse voices, some strong and powerful, some weak, but all of them valuable.

Its focus is always on the future, visions of what impact technology and laws are going to have in years to come, even decades to come.

From Toys that Listen (this is the Dark Side of the Force), to digital accountability and ethics - this is clearly the good side of the Force.

This year the theme has been Invisibilities and Infrastructures. The technological aspect of the conversation on privacy and data protection has been bigger than ever.

Data protection is going digital - and I was so pleased to see so many participants ready to develop an ambitious plan for the IPEN initiative.

Throughout the conference the centre of gravity is the individual human being.

'The processing of personal data should be designed to serve mankind' - that is the third recital of the final text of the GDPR. We insisted on the retention of this statement in the text. It is a sentence needs that needs to be repeated over and over again, when companies and governments implement the rules, and when independent DPAs enforce the rules.

In the great Galactic Republic of computing, data protection and privacy, we are discovering new regions which are relevant - like global trade rules, intellectual property and competition law.

These were all themes which have been explored at this conference.

The CPDP twitter feed is always interesting, though may not always be encouraging.

But it is testimony to the diversity of views, intellectual integrity and space for dissent, even subversion - and we must always have that space.

Remember these words? "We must keep our faith in the Republic. The day we stop believing democracy can work is the day we lose it."

This is a global conversation.

Last year Professor Graham Greenleaf counted 109 countries with data privacy laws.

For the first time European countries are in the minority.

Europe is a thought-leader on data protection, but this is not guaranteed to last for ever.

We have friends from Asia, Africa and Latin America at this conference and I will be spending time with them this year as part of our effort to build privacy bridges to all regions of the world, in the interests of the individual.

I mentioned bridges, but what about harbours and the ongoing negotiations? Will they be really safe, for whom and for how long?

In the words of my fellow Roman citizen, *Errare humanum est, sed in errare perseverare diabolicum*.

Europe and our old partner the United States are at a strategic moment.

We welcome new solutions, and this is important not just for flows across the Atlantic.

It is also important for setting a strong model for flows across the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

The Safe Harbour negotiators have a particular duty to find a solution which is not just legally defensible, but also credible, persuasive, morally sustainable.

A deadline looms for an agreement - some might say an artificial deadline.

But this is not the January sales: we cannot short-change the citizen and her and his rights.

The EU Commission needs to be able to do its job: its solemn function as Guardian of the EU Treaties, which includes the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

We must find solutions that do not create more uncertainty.

And please forget FAQs. Explanations, clear and honest, must be available on the websites, not hidden in a legal text.

Instead, I would leave you with a K.I.S.S.: Keep it Simple.

A text which can be understood and easily implemented and enforced - That is the homework for the negotiators over this busy weekend.

So let me please thank and congratulate Paul de Hert and all his team who have worked so hard for months to bring this event together.

Thank you to all who have contributed.

EDPS has provided more input than ever before and we are proud to continue to sponsor and support CPDP.

As we return to our distant corners of the data protection galaxy, we know that independent data protection authorities are ready to enforce these rules with rigour, as referees of personal data processing .

In other words, Ladies and Gentlemen, the *Umpire* Strikes Back.

Thank you. I wish you a safe journey home. And may the force be with you!