



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**ITEM 119: COMMEMORATION OF THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY AND THE
TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
STATEMENT BY CHRISTIAN WENAWESER, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

Mr. President,

This debate today offers us an opportunity to pay tribute to the victims of one of the most heinous crimes against humanity, but also to reflect on its continued relevance today. Liechtenstein is proud to have contributed to the creation of a permanent memorial. Its presence near the entrance to the UN building is not only a powerful reminder of the tragedy of the past, but also of the challenges that remain with regard to slavery in our times.

During more than 400 years, over 15 million men, women and children had fallen victim to the transatlantic slave trade, one of the darkest chapters in human history. The victims were forcibly removed from their families and homes, transferred overseas in the most appalling and inhumane conditions resulting in innumerable deaths, and those who survived subjected to

forced labor and abuse – and permanently deprived of their most basic human rights. The monument we have erected is a dignified, important reminder of this terrifying crime against humanity. It must also serve as a reminder of our common commitment to ensure the absolute prohibition of slavery in all its forms. Looking at today’s reality we have to admit that we are far away from reaching this goal. Today, an estimated 45 million people live in conditions that qualify as modern slavery – more than ever before. The scourge of slavery persists, even though its prohibition is a *ius cogens* under international law and one of the most powerful international legal norms.

Mr. President

Despite the fact that slavery is outlawed universally, human trafficking and enslavement are crimes committed at a large scale and with widespread impunity. Every single country is affected by modern slavery, in very different areas. Billions of dollars are generated through it every year. Modern slavery and human trafficking are not only one of the biggest human rights scandals of our time, they are also amongst the most lucrative business models of organized crime. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda in particular has generated a fresh and dynamic momentum to address modern slavery in all its aspects. Modern slavery and human trafficking are mentioned in three of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda thus gives us the platform to tackle this not merely as a law enforcement issue, but indeed in a much broader manner. Given the complexity of the phenomenon of modern slavery, we all have an opportunity to contribute to the achievement of our common goal – to abolish modern slavery.

Liechtenstein is currently focusing on two aspects in particular. First, we are trying to address the “business side” of modern slavery. Given that modern slavery is among the most profitable illegal business models, we can make use of tools that have proven effective in other areas. For

example, disrupting financial flows and using relevant data for criminal prosecutions - in short, “following the money”. We are planning to elaborate a set of concrete measures that will help enhance coordination among national judiciaries and enable effective prosecutions.

Second, we are working to address the enormous impunity gap with action at the international level. As national judiciaries have systematically failed, there is a clear case for involving and making use of international justice – in particular the International Criminal Court. The Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the ICC, has jurisdiction over enslavement both as a war crime and as a crime against humanity. Given the universal nature of the phenomenon of modern slavery, the Court could play a dual role: creating incentives for States to investigate and prosecute at the national level and doing so itself where the impunity gap persists. We will continue exploring options together with the Court to this end.

Mr. President,

While human trafficking and modern slavery have been on the UN agenda for many years, we have clearly not been effective in addressing this scourge. We are grateful to see the new momentum from the membership to do better and we welcome upcoming opportunities. Key among them is the open debate in the Security Council in December, in follow up to the first ever Presidential Statement adopted by the Council on human trafficking in armed conflict last year. As input for this discussion, we have organized, together with United Nations University (UNU), the Mission of the United Kingdom and civil society partners a seminar which has produced a set of recommendations for inclusion in a resolution that we believe the Security Council should adopt in December. We have presented the report to the membership early September and hope that the recommendations of action in particular will be widely read and processed. We welcome the leadership of the Council on this topic. At the same time, the

phenomena of human trafficking and modern slavery are not limited to times of armed conflict. That is why many of the recommendations in the report can also be applied outside the context of the Council's work.

Another important opportunity is the upcoming review of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, scheduled for October 2017. We look forward to a well-managed process that will allow us to explore new options for action that we may have neglected in the past and to move forward on the basis of consensus. The review year should also be the moment for us to work towards universal ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, also known as the Palermo Convention. We will organize a side event to this effect together with the UN Office on Drugs and Crimes and our partners from Austria, Slovenia and Switzerland in the course of next week, as part of our activities around the Women, Peace and Security debate in the Security Council.

Modern-day slavery is a complex phenomenon that affects all of us and should leave none of us indifferent. As individuals, as policy-makers, as consumers, we all have an opportunity to make a small contribution to eradicate what is at the same time a human tragedy and a big obstacle to sustainable development. This, we believe, is the best contribution we can make to commemorate this day in a meaningful way.

I thank you.