



**PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
NEW YORK**

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NEW YORK, 4 NOVEMBER 2016

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ITEM 63: REPORT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER**

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of Iceland and my own country, Liechtenstein.

We thank the President of the Human Rights Council for presenting the Council's report to the General Assembly – an established practice that reinforces the dynamic relationship between the Council and the Assembly.

The Council can look back at a busy, successful and historic year – its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary – and we commend President Choi for his able leadership. What started out in 2006 as a project met with opposition from different sides has now become one of the international community's most important instruments in promoting universal respect for all human rights and in addressing situations of gross and systematic human rights violations. In its 10-year history the Council has adopted landmark resolutions and appointed special mandate holders on important issues such as violence against women, human rights defenders and the right to privacy. It has also established several country-specific mechanisms and in particular Commissions of Inquiry - in

Syria, Eritrea, South Sudan, Libya, Gaza, North Korea and Burundi.

Many of these achievements capture the original idea behind the Council: to promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, without distinction of any kind and guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and constructive dialogue and cooperation – but also to address specifically those situations where human rights are systematically violated. Unfortunately, the Council has become more and more polarized in recent years. The opposition to certain country-specific issues as well as thematic issues has become a matter of politics; and the actual human rights consequences for thousands, sometimes millions of people have taken a backseat. This polarization even has an effect on issues where members had previously been united, leading to regressions on previously agreed commitments and standards. There also seems to be a tendency to reduce engagement at the Human Rights Council – resolutions are often not subject to actual negotiations, and there are no genuine efforts to narrow differences and to increase political support. We hope that this is a trend that we will see reversed.

Mr. President

The creation of the Human Rights Council was based on the understanding that those who serve on it commit themselves to cooperation and to the promotion and protection of human rights. In order to allow for informed decisions, candidate countries are asked to submit voluntary pledges and commitments. The practice today is that a vast majority of States running for the Council make such submissions, but that they are barely a factor in our decision-making – and often amount to little more than a somewhat interesting read. We of course need to look at our behavior as the electorate: We have the choice to ask for genuine commitments and implementation, while our decision-making today is largely based on considerations that have little to do with an interest in a strong performance of the Council. We believe that overall political commitments, such as support for the ACT Code of Conduct on Mass Atrocities should play an important part in our decision-making in Council elections.

Mr. President,

Let me offer a few comments on issues covered in the latest report: We are particularly concerned by the insufficient action of the Council on the situation in **Yemen**. The Council has adopted a resolution on technical assistance and capacity building in the field of human rights – hardly a reflection of the actual needs on the ground. Given the reports of massive and frequent violations of international humanitarian law, the situation in Yemen would have deserved nothing short of a commission of inquiry to collect evidence of human rights abuses and violations on the ground.

The Human Rights Council has been seized with the situation in **Syria** for several years now. Its most important decision was undoubtedly the creation of a Commission of Inquiry which has supplied ample evidence and documentation of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the conflict parties. The Council has also recently met in a Special Session to address the situation in Aleppo, which was of particular importance after the veto cast in the Security Council on 8 October. The efforts of the Commission in particular are of continued high relevance, but it is also obvious that our activities are inadequate, in particular in the area of accountability, where we have failed the victims of the conflict in Syria for over five years now. We believe that the time has come for this Assembly to step up and play its own role in this respect.

Mr. President,

In the reporting period, the Council has created several new mandates for special procedures and renewed many others. We call on all countries to cooperate with the **special procedures, including by issuing standing invitations** and to enable them to conduct their work independently and without interference. Their valuable work supports us in moving towards the achievement of commitments we have made – in the UN Charter, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in conventions and in recent agreements such as the 2030 Agenda. We commend the Council in particular on the recent creation of a mandate for an independent expert on the protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual

orientation and gender identity, and congratulate Mr. Muntarhorn on his appointment as independent expert. Ever since the first resolution on this issue was brought forward by South Africa and Brazil in 2011, it has been high on the agenda of the Council. The creation of a special mandate is a reflection of its importance, further underlined by the many heinous crimes committed against LGBTI persons around the globe.

Liechtenstein would also like to highlight that in conformity with the outcome of the Review of the Human Rights Council contained GA resolution 65/281, it is up to the plenary of the General Assembly - and not of its Third Committee - to take action on the report of the Council. The Review contains the understanding that the Third Committee would consider and act on recommendations of the HRC to the GA. We call on all delegations to respect the agreed understanding in the Review as well as to not undo the valuable work carried out by the Human Rights Council.

I thank you!