



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

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NEW YORK, 7 APRIL 2017

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**AGENDA ITEM 131: “GLOBAL AWARENESS OF THE TRAGEDIES OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN, WITH SPECIFIC EMPHASIS ON SYRIAN ASYLUM SEEKERS”**

**STATEMENT BY GEORG SPARBER**

CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES A.I.

Mr. President,

Last week the UN reported that 5 Mio. Syrians have now fled to neighboring countries – a new but sadly unsurprising record high in light of an ongoing devastating conflict in Syria. The chemical weapons attack earlier this week is a particularly abhorrent example of the complete disregard for international law that has characterized the Syrian conflict since its beginning. The perpetrators of this and other war crimes must be held accountable, but the Security Council has yet again refused to take responsibility. It has continuously failed to meet the expectations of the 112 signatories of the ACT Code of Conduct<sup>1</sup>, a large majority of the UN membership. This only adds to the relevance of the Code of Conduct and I take this opportunity to again invite all remaining States to join this initiative.

Combatting impunity for human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law are priorities in Liechtenstein’s efforts to mitigate the suffering of refugees and migrants and to prevent other crises from erupting. Accountability not only brings justice to victims, it

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<sup>1</sup> Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes

<sup>2</sup> A/RES/71/248 “International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for

also has a deterrent effect and lays the foundation for reconciliation. The GA resolution establishing an accountability Mechanism<sup>2</sup> for crimes committed in Syria is an important step in this direction. The Mechanism enjoys very broad support within the UN membership, both politically and financially, and is a welcome sign that the GA is ready to assume responsibility in light of the systemic failure of the Security Council to address the crisis in Syria.

Mr. President,

Liechtenstein applauds the immense display of solidarity by Syria's neighboring countries, in particular Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, who continue to welcome Syrian refugees in large numbers. Their commitment reflects our view that every State must contribute with solidarity to the mitigation of the migration and refugee situation. Migration should take place in a safe and orderly manner. States must also uphold their obligations under the relevant international instruments on refugees. We call on all States to participate in resettlement and relocation programs. By participating in UNHCR's resettlement program as well as in the EU's relocation scheme Liechtenstein contributes to joint international efforts to address the mass displacement from Syria. In addition, Liechtenstein has provided more than 2.5 Million Swiss Francs, or close to 70 USD per capita, in humanitarian and development aid for projects supporting Syrian refugees. These projects share a long-term perspective and include schooling for over 20'000 Syrian refugees and local children in Jordan and Lebanon, the building of sustainable institutions and the promotion of women's empowerment. They also contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which enhances the resilience and stability of societies. In its national policy Liechtenstein pays particular attention to early integration of refugees and migrants. With an innovative program called "Liechtenstein Languages" refugees and migrants can learn the basics of the German language within just a few weeks, allowing them to quickly interact with the local population and the public administration.

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<sup>2</sup> A/RES/71/248 "International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011"

Mr. President,

Liechtenstein supports efforts towards the universalization of the Palermo Convention and its Protocols that provide a key legal framework to combat the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking. Organized crime often targets and exploits the most vulnerable, amongst them refugees and migrants, and in particular women and children. Far too many of them end up in modern slavery, be it in the form of forced prostitution, forced labor or other forms of slavery. The prohibition of slavery is one of the very rare norms of international law that applies at all times, in all places, to all actors. States are under a clear legal obligation to criminalize, investigate, prosecute and punish slavery where it occurs. Yet, the impunity gap is glaring, in spite of the strong universal legal norm. As a contribution to narrowing that gap Liechtenstein pursues innovative approaches. These include involving financial institutions in detecting and disrupting financial flows associated with modern slavery, in other words: “following the money”. Liechtenstein recently organized a workshop with UN University on this topic and will present the results in the framework of the upcoming High-level Political Forum.

Modern slavery is one of the most egregious human rights violations. We have collectively committed to its eradication in the framework of the SDGs. In order to succeed, we have to focus on the most vulnerable, in particular on those who are forced to flee conflict, hunger and persecution.

I thank you