



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

NEW YORK, 22 SEPTEMBER 2017

**UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 72ND SESSION
GENERAL DEBATE**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. Ms. AURELIA FRICK
FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,

It is good to see you preside over this session of the Assembly, Mr. President. We know that we are in able hands. I look forward to working closely with you. We also salute Secretary-General Guterres for his leadership. I am confident that he will chart an intelligent course to the changes that we wish to see in the United Nations.

Mr. President

You have suggested to us the theme “focus on people”. This takes us back to the very beginning of the UN Charter, written on behalf of the peoples of the world. To this day, the United Nations symbolizes great hope around the globe: Hope for peace, hope for justice, hope for a life in dignity and decency. It represents nothing but the most basic ambition of every human being. And yet, attaining these hopes remains elusive for millions. And they are shattered for millions of others.

Intolerance and nationalism were drivers of World War II in response to which this organization was founded. It is a place where we seek solutions, together – instead of pursuing nationalist agendas. Only in embracing this understanding will we be able to get the best results at the United Nations. The horrors of armed conflict, the tragedy of World War II in particular, led the founding nations to pledge to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. We have undertaken a collective obligation to remove threats to the peace and to suppress acts of aggression. But today we often manage and contain armed conflict rather than preventing it in the first place. We must do better. This year we have the opportunity to make a historic step forward. For the first time since the creation of the United Nations, we can give an international tribunal jurisdiction over the crime of aggression: The most serious forms of the illegal use of force will be punishable. The tribunal in charge will be the International Criminal Court, the centerpiece of our common fight for accountability. I appeal to all of you today: Live up to the commitment we have made when signing on to the UN Charter. Let us enforce the prohibition

of the illegal use of force by making it punishable in the highest court of criminal law that we have.

Next year, we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the ICC. With jurisdiction over the most serious offences against international law, it represents an enormous achievement. But it still lacks universality. A significant impunity gap therefore remains. There is still a very large number of people who do not benefit from its legal protection. They must not be left without hope. They also deserve a real prospect for justice. The people of Syria in particular have suffered unspeakable violence. The crimes committed against them are atrocious. And the silence which has been our only response for a long time puts us all to shame. But finally, late last year, we came together to create a real prospect for justice: The accountability mechanism (IIIM) which this Assembly established. The mechanism itself will not conduct criminal proceedings against the perpetrators. But it can be critically important. Preparing case files for prosecutions in courts with jurisdiction is a decisive step forward. A key to its success is strong support from us States: Politically, by insisting on the importance of justice as part of political solutions. Financially, by providing sustainable funding. Substantively, by sharing information and evidence of crimes that is in our possession.

Accountability for the worst crimes imaginable, committed in Syria but also elsewhere, is essential. But the truth is also: There is no remedy and no compensation for these crimes. Prevention is the only effective form of protection. We are looking for leadership by the Security Council in particular. I thank the 113 States who have joined us in supporting the Code of Conduct for the Security Council for mass atrocity crimes. Together, we represent a strong majority of States who look for effective action by the Council to end and prevent such crimes. This pledge could not come at a better moment: Secretary General Guterres has made prevention a key priority of his agenda. And applying the Code of Conduct works best in a productive interplay between him and the Security Council.

Mr. President

Never before have the needs for humanitarian assistance been as big as they are today. And never before have we seen such a significant shortfall in our response. The so-called “forgotten crises”, are those which may need our attention the most. Yet, our collective attention span barely does justice to the most visible emergencies. Armed conflict remains a key driver of displacement, of human suffering, of instability. But there are numerous other factors that make people leave their homes. Globally, unprecedented numbers of people are on the move. History has seen various periods of mass migration. There is ample evidence that migration has been a positive and enriching factor for receiving societies. But mass movements of people and irregular migration in particular also tend to create anxiety and fear. Taking these reactions seriously is crucial to overcome them. My son entered kindergarten last year. Two children in his group are refugees from Syria. As a mother, I reflected on how this might influence him and his development. What happened was that he quickly learned a few words in Arabic and what a Syrian birthday cake tastes like. He also understands now that there are kids who spend every night thinking that their house might be bombed.

We place high hopes in the Global Compact on Migration that we will adopt together next year. I echo the call of Secretary-General Guterres: Migration must be an option, not a necessity. Irregular migrants are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Human trafficking and modern slavery are perhaps the biggest human rights scandal of our time. They are a global phenomenon. But they thrive especially in circumstances that create high levels of vulnerability. As is the case so often, women and girls are disproportionately affected. We have agreed, many decades ago, on the abolition of slavery in all its forms. The relevant legal norm has universal application. And yet, reality is: There is a disturbing level of impunity for them. We must no longer accept this paradox. Human trafficking and modern slavery are not only crimes. They are also a profitable form of organized crime. We see big potential in applying the tools developed to combat other forms of organized crime. Following the money can lead us to the perpetrators. Liechtenstein is prepared to make the expertise available that we have generated as a financial center committed to international standards of transparency and accountability.

Mr. President,

The people we serve look at us to reduce risks, to defuse tensions. Yet the world spirals towards a new arms race. We are facing increased risks of self-destruction. This includes the unspeakable horror of the use of nuclear weapons. Most of us remember the shocking pictures from Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 from our history books. The United Nations was built on the ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and on the promise of “never again”. But we have not delivered on this promise – in collective complacency. This week we have changed course for the better, with the signing of the treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons. No doubt, it will take time to see the effects of the treaty on nuclear stockpiles. But setting a number of important legal benchmarks that will become binding norms is great progress. Nuclear weapons are prohibited and should be eliminated. Their use can never be justified. The suffering they cause runs counter to the principles of humanity, basic tenets of international humanitarian law and the dictates of public conscience. On Wednesday, I signed the treaty on behalf of Liechtenstein, as one of 50 States. Together we extend a hand to those who so far have chosen to stay apart. We need their commitment to finally rid the world of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President,

I have had the privilege to speak before this Assembly eight times already. Every single time I have talked about one aspect of the UN work that is particularly dear to me: Full gender equality. The progress of the past decades has slowed down significantly, both internationally and back home. This is a disturbing trend. Commitments have gone unfulfilled, and strategies have turned out to be little more than empty promises. Achievements that nobody questioned twenty years ago are under attack. Levels of political participation decrease. The numbers on gender pay gaps are still shocking. And yet, I remain not only committed, but also optimistic: Simply because I strongly believe that many of our common goals will only become achievable if we indeed achieve gender equality. In the Sustainable Development Goals, the domestic and the international come together. If there is one area where the UN must show the way, this is certainly it.

The work of the United Nations can seem abstract. Explaining its relevance to our citizens at home, to our children can be a challenge. There are other topics that make that task much easier, for example climate change. Everybody understands the parameters of the discussion: If we have no livable planet, nobody will prosper, irrespective of nationality, gender, economic wealth. And none of us, large or small, can tackle the problem on our own. The Paris Agreement does not end the threat of climate change. But it is our only realistic hope to address it, together. Depositing our instrument of ratification earlier this week therefore gave me great satisfaction. And it is something that I will be proud to share with my children.

I thank you.