



GOVERNMENT  
PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN

MINISTRY OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE

# Speech by Deputy Prime Minister Sabine Monauni

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at the  
80th Session of the United Nations General Debate  
25. September 2025  
United Nations, New York

Madame President

Let me begin by saying how happy I am to see a woman preside over this Assembly – for only the fifth time in the history of the United Nations and for the first time by a woman from our region. It is my hope that this is also a good sign for the selection process of the next Secretary General – a position in which no woman has ever served, over eight decades – and which will be conducted under your leadership. It is a distinct honor and pleasure for me to address this Assembly for the first time as Foreign Minister, continuing a very long tradition of female Foreign Ministers in Liechtenstein. The United Nations is a key building block of our foreign policy, which is guided by a strong belief in international law, cooperation, and multilateralism.

We are gathering at a landmark moment in the history of the United Nations: For over eighty years, this has been the place where nations have come together, where international law has been developed, where human rights have been codified, where we have agreed on common development goals. Of course, it has also been the source of many disappointments. Too often people around the world have been looking to this Assembly and at the Security Council Chamber next door in the hope of decisive action to secure peace, the key purpose of this organization, only to realize that political paralysis was shattering these expectations, justified as they were. In Ukraine our system has allowed the aggressor to veto collective action supported by the vast majority of the house. In Gaza, we have become bystanders despite the fact that the Two-State solution was one of the first decisions of the United Nations many decades ago. We are merely witnesses to the unprecedented and unjustifiable suffering of civilians, in spite of our pledge to end and prevent atrocity crimes. The people of Sudan must have concluded that indifference is the guiding principle of our rare discussions – and that the outrage over a cynical veto wears off after a few weeks, if not days.

These challenges to the credibility of the United Nations would be massive enough in and of themselves. But if we are looking at a completely uncertain future for this organization today, it is for largely different reasons. The very foundations of the United Nations are being challenged in a way we have not seen before. Such efforts threaten to undermine our joint commitments to solve common problems together, on the basis of the principle of sovereign equality; the principle that we set ourselves rules that apply to us all, equally, and that they are enforced equally - and the belief in the value of international law as the common ground that allows us to govern world affairs in a way that is predictable, equitable and fair.

For us in Liechtenstein, the United Nations – which we joined 35 years ago – occupies a special place. It has been instrumental in our progress towards gender equality. Our membership in the organization has helped to put human rights at the center of our foreign policy. The Sustainable Development Goals have been embraced by civil society and the private sector. Most essentially, the Charter of the United Nations is the guarantor of our sovereignty. The United Nations is also our window to the world and the one place where we can connect with everyone. And it offers a unique foreign policy platform where we can present our initiatives and ideas, as a sovereign equal. We have done so with commitment and enthusiasm and, I believe, with some success. Today, we feel a special bond with every other State which is small in size,

but not small in ambition and vision. Today we realize more than ever that we need this organization. We need a world based on rules that we have all agreed to. And especially now, those who share these views need to join together in common purpose to safeguard our common interests.

The times we live in are fast paced and full of challenges that can seem incredibly daunting. Many years ago, we identified climate change as the biggest threat to us all – big and small, wherever we are located on the globe. And yet, we are ever closer to the climate abyss and ever further away from agreeing on a path away from disaster. Artificial Intelligence is developing with lightning speed, largely unchecked, with obvious risks to our social fabric, but without any agreement on rules and boundaries.

In my part of the world, priorities have shifted dramatically in the last three years. We are now mostly preoccupied with the fallout of the destruction of the European security architecture by the Russian Federation - and with preserving our trade relationships, which we had believed were on a firm basis. Liechtenstein is no different to our neighbours in this regard, and any responsible State will prioritize imminent challenges, as we have to. But none of this will be meaningful if it is not embedded in a larger vision, if we do not give ourselves the space to tackle the long-term risks and dangers. The place for us to do this is the United Nations. And we are committed to doing this together with all of you represented in this room.

Madame President

Today, the continued existence of the United Nations is at stake. This is a sobering observation, certainly. But we must find the opportunity that lies in this moment of existential crisis. We have allowed a system to grow that is plagued by duplication, inefficiency and poor governance. The “UN80” process is the chance – the only chance that we will have – to make the organization leaner, more effective in its use of resources and more productive in generating meaningful outcomes. When we adopted the Pact of the Future a year ago, Liechtenstein made a clear call for this organization to embrace its original purpose as the guardian of peace and security. For our people, our parliamentarians, our civil society, the United Nations is a peace organization. We have to find a way to make it effective in fulfilling this task. If the Security Council is unable to carry out its Charter responsibility, as is regularly the case due to the veto power of its Permanent Members, there are ways for us to take collective action elsewhere, beginning in this hall. We are equally committed to the other pillars of the work of the United Nations – development and human rights, which are existential for the dignity and wellbeing of the people on whose behalf we serve, and pivotal for more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies.

Madame President

The rule of law is the guiding principle of Liechtenstein’s work at the United Nations. This can come as no surprise for one of the smallest members of the organization that does not have armed forces and is not member of a military alliance. Our sovereignty is protected by respect for international law, and by its enforcement through accountability where the law is violated. Naturally, we are strong supporters of international courts, the indispensable enforcement mechanism of international law. Key amongst them is the International Court of Justice, which Liechtenstein

joined decades before becoming a member of the United Nations. Liechtenstein has been an active participant in the Court's proceedings. We are very pleased to see the attention the Court's work has been given, particularly in recent years – and the high respect its decisions enjoy among Governments and beyond. The recent advisory opinion on the question of climate change stands out in various ways. The initiative to ask for such an advisory opinion originated in the youth climate movement. The mandate to request it was adopted by this Assembly by consensus, and Liechtenstein is proud to have been among the States drafting the text of the decision. The proceedings before the Court found unprecedented attention, inside and outside the courtroom. Finally, and importantly, the advisory opinion was agreed on unanimously by all 15 judges, giving it further authority. We have welcomed this decision, in particular its focus on the area of human rights, where important questions remain unaddressed. And we look forward to working with all of you to put it to the most productive use possible.

For us, the International Criminal Court is a complementary and equally important institution. It is the first permanent Court in the history of humankind that has jurisdiction over the crimes that are defined as the most serious ones under international law: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression. Almost two thirds of all States have joined this project, the most ambitious treaty since the adoption of the Charter itself. Its central statement is unique and also uniquely important for the rule of law: Nobody is above the law. Nobody is protected from investigation and prosecution for what we have all agreed are the most serious crimes under international law. As we look at the flashpoints around the globe – be it Ukraine, the Middle East, or Sudan – we see how the basic rules of international law are violated, not just frequently but systematically. This is why we have created the International Criminal Court: to offer protection to the victims and the vulnerable, but also to safeguard international peace and security. Today, the Court finds itself under significant political attack and is targeted by unprecedented sanctions. This is the moment for us to protect this unique institution, one of the most powerful statements we can make to express our commitment to international law.

Madame President

The most among many worrying trends with regard to the respect for the United Nations Charter is the rapid erosion of the rules governing the use of force: Instances of the blatantly illegal use of force, without any consequences or accountability, the threat of the use of force to solve disputes, and the suggestion that aggression may not only go unpunished, but in fact be rewarded and incentivized as part of a political agreement. These dangerous trends can set us back to a time we all believe we have left behind – and they are an attack on the very core of the Charter of the United Nations. Mitigating the fallout of armed conflict will sadly remain part of our daily work. But it is time that we become serious about our central task: preventing war in the first place, ending war where it takes place, and ensuring accountability for illegal war-making. The International Criminal Court, the only institution with jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, is therefore key to enforcing the UN Charter – and thus deserves the support of all States, including those who have yet to join it.

Madame President

Our world is in a very difficult place today, with the forces of destruction and indeed self-destruction on the rise. If we are to have a chance to be successful in our fight against them, to safeguard our planet for future generations, we need this place – a stronger, better United Nations that we can shape together.

I thank you.