GOVERNMENT
PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN

MINISTRY OF
GENERAL GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS AND FINANCE

Speech by Prime Minister Brigitte Haas

Minister of General Government Affairs and Finance

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Rathaus Vaduz

– Check against delivery –

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you to Liechtenstein.

When I look around this room, I see representatives from every region of the world, from large and small states. For a country with a population of around 40,000, this is by no means a matter of course. It is a sign of trust, and for that I thank you.
Liechtenstein may be small by size, but open-minded. We have always thrived on building bridges: to our neighbours, to Europe and to the world. This openness has brought us prosperity, stability and friends.
Yet we now live in an age in which certainties are becoming increasingly fragile:
wars, trade conflicts and hybrid threats: what once seemed far away to many of us is drawing nearer. This applies to large states. And it applies, perhaps even more so, to small ones.

One might think that a small state in the heart of Europe lies sheltered, safe from the great storms. That is a misconception. We in Liechtenstein, too, are not an island. Why?

Our industry operates globally. Just two weeks ago, I was in Vietnam to conclude a free trade agreement together with our EFTA partners Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. During that visit, I also visited the production facilities of a Liechtenstein-based company. This once again impressively demonstrated to me just how closely we are interconnected with the world.
The same applies to our financial centre. Our financial service providers operate globally and are therefore subject to international regulatory frameworks.
We share a customs union and currency with Switzerland, and the single market with the EEA. We import by far the largest proportion of our energy, and we also rely on other countries for specialist medical services.
So, as you can see, what affects the world also affects Liechtenstein: trade conflicts, supply chains, energy prices, but also, more generally, geopolitical sentiments and tensions.

We are aware of this situation. In May of this year, the Government therefore presented its first Security Policy Strategy. It implements the mandate set out in our Government Programme: to shape security in a comprehensive, integrated and forward-looking manner.
The core of the security strategy is a holistic approach. The strategy links internal security, economic security, security of supply, the protection of critical infrastructure, civil protection, crisis management and foreign policy.
It operates in three dimensions: we shape, we prevent, and we respond. And it is based on three guiding principles: ensuring stability, strengthening cohesion, and increasing resilience.
However, we must also be honest with ourselves. We do not have an army and do not belong to any defence alliance. We are therefore openly examining how we can prepare for new threats and with which partners we can further strengthen our security.

States, however, face challenges not only from outside, but also from in-ternal tensions: polarisation, disinformation and dwindling trust.
The past few weeks have also shown us this. Hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets in several European countries, concerned about housing costs, the cost of living and the state of public services such as education. The vast majority have demonstrated peacefully. In some major cities, however, there have been instances of utterly unacceptable violence, looting and attacks on the emergency services.

In Liechtenstein, too, we are familiar with concerns about housing costs and the cost of living. We are therefore trying to learn from these events. In doing so, three things strike me as important.

Firstly: People's concerns are real and deserve to be heard. Social cohesion depends on whether people feel their concerns are being taken seriously, even in a small country.
Secondly: Violence is not the answer. The right to peaceful protest is a cornerstone of every democracy. It deserves protection, which is why it is so important that it is not abused by those who seek to cause chaos.
Thirdly: Resilience is built before a crisis strikes. That is why it is a pillar in its own right within our strategy. It strengthens awareness of democratic values and social cohesion. It protects the information landscape from disinformation and promotes media literacy and media diversity, because in tense situations, rumours spread faster than facts.
It relies on personal responsibility: every household should be able to be self-sufficient for at least a week.
And it builds on our security network, in which professional and voluntary organisations work together and many people voluntarily take on responsibility.

Resilience cannot be imposed by politicians. However, politicians can and must establish the necessary framework conditions to allow resilience to grow. We cannot command it, but we can empower it.
Resilience flourishes where people trust one another, where people know one another, where communication channels are short, and where conflicts can be resolved openly without resorting to violence. In a country like Liechtenstein, this presents an opportunity. Over the coming months, we will gain our first insights into our strategy and are ready to share these with you. This open dialogue is part of our foreign policy. And that brings me to my final point.

Precisely because our security policy is holistic, foreign policy occupies a special place within it. For a state of our size, it is not just one of many policy areas, but a cornerstone.
Our security stems from our integration into shared rules, procedures and trust. That is why we maintain close relations with our neighbours. We are members of the EEA, EFTA and the WTO, and we are actively involved in the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.
And this brings me to you, Excellencies. Diplomacy is the craft by which states build trust, defuse conflicts and find solutions before violence erupts. It is quiet, patient and rarely spectacular. But it is often more effective than anything else. You, gathered here

today, are the face of this endeavour. You are the bridge-builders between your countries and us. Without your work, your discussions and your perseverance, the international order would be poorer and less secure. For this, you deserve our thanks. You help the world to build trust. And where the rule of law prevails, trust grows. And where trust grows, prosperity grows.

And this brings us full circle back to internal resilience.

Excellencies
Liechtenstein is navigating these times with realism, but also with a healthy dose of confidence. We are aware of our vulnerabilities, but also of our strengths. One of these, I dare say, is our international integration and cross-border cooperation, as today's event demonstrates.
Representatives from industry and the financial sector will now outline the specific impact of the uncertain global situation on our economy. They experience these changes first-hand on a daily basis, and I look forward to hearing their assessments.

Thank you for coming, for your partnership and for your trust.