

**INFORMAL THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY:
PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

STATEMENT

BY

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame President

It is an honor for me to take the floor before this august assembly on a topic which is very dear to me personally and very important for the Liechtenstein Government and the international community. I am also very pleased to participate in this debate because you have taken this initiative as one of the very few women presidents of the General Assembly, thereby demonstrating both the particular role of the General Assembly as the only universal body to address issues of global significance and the highly valuable contributions that women make to political decision-taking if they are enabled to do so. Your international leadership may serve as an inspiration and encouragement for many women and men to pursue their efforts in achieving gender parity in decision-making at all levels.

Madame President

The Liechtenstein Government welcomes the recent appointments of the Secretary General, in particular his decision to assign the post of Deputy Secretary General to Ms Asha-Rose Migiro and the appointments of Ms. Alicia Bárcena Ibarra, Ms. Inga-Britt Ahlenius and Ms. Michelle Montas in senior positions. Publicity of female politicians and decision-makers can encourage other women to run for political functions. Such publicity may be acquired either through direct contact with the electorate or through media attention – which in turn increases with the level of decision-making. In this regard, international organizations like the United Nations could play a far more important role. The UN example could have a catalytic effect for the promotion of gender equality if the Secretariat were to continue to take an even more prominent role in assuring that the principle of gender parity is considered as important as the principle of equitable geographic distribution.

Madame President

Liechtenstein has been advocating for many years the appointment of women as special envoys and special representatives of the Secretary-General for preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and peace-building. There is ample evidence that women are very active in informal peace processes. However, this is not the case in formal processes. All too often this is due to the fact that women are hardly represented in the official groups that are common players in settling a conflict, such as Governments, political parties, armed groups or militias. In addition, a lack of knowledge of the manner in which formal processes are conducted or of international legal and other standards is often put forward as an excuse for not including women in such formal processes. Strengthening women's capacity as peacemakers must be pursued in parallel with increasing women's participation. At the same time, women need to be encouraged and empowered to hold decision-making positions. Creating awareness of peace negotiations as a tool for achieving gender equality is essential. The appointments of women as special envoys and special representatives could play a major catalytic role for the stronger involvement

of women in peace processes, especially when they reach more formal stages. They would also strengthen the awareness of the need to mainstream gender issues not only into peace processes but also into other political processes.

We are, of course, aware of the need to provide the Secretary General with names of potential, well-qualified candidates for such posts. For this reason, I had taken the initiative, during my tenure as Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the United Nations, to join forces with interested delegations and NGOs in gathering the necessary information to help make the appointment of women to such posts not only a high priority but a recurring reality. We are convinced that Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon could also greatly benefit from such efforts since information is also a key issue when it comes to the appointments to high-ranking posts in this organisation. The fact that the International Court of Justice is, for the first time ever, presided over by a woman should encourage us and set the example for appointments and elections to other important functions in the United Nations family. The elections to the International Criminal Court have proven that it is possible to create the incentives for States to nominate and elect qualified women for such high office. Currently, 8 out of 18 judges of the ICC are women. This result was facilitated by an innovative election procedure, which increased the likelihood of a gender balanced result through so-called “minimum voting requirements”, without however imposing quotas on the outcome of the elections.

Madame President

It goes without saying that measures to increase the number of women in decision-making processes in order to fully benefit from women’s potentials in achieving the Millennium Development Goals can only be sustainable if they are accompanied by an enabling and supportive environment. The empowerment of women requires effective action to reduce their political, economic, social and cultural dependence from men-dominated decision-taking. This objective can only be attained if all members of the international community seriously address issues like equal access to education, health services, employment opportunities and financial services, early marriage, discriminatory inheritance laws and all forms of violence against women and girls. The General Assembly should play an essential role in creating the necessary momentum to meet this challenge. We hope that this high-level debate and its follow-up will make an important contribution to this end.

I thank you.