



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

GENERAL ASSEMBLY, FIRST COMMITTEE

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR DR. PETER MATT

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UN IN GENEVA

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Chair,

The First Committee of the 72nd UN General Assembly meets under critical circumstances. Geopolitical tensions are high, the threat of nuclear destruction is more tangible than it has been in a long time, and a new arms race risks spiraling out of control. The international community is at cross-roads as our collective disarmament efforts need urgent revitalization and redirection. We owe it to future generations that we take our responsibility as diplomats seriously; that we help avert escalation and find constructive ways to revive dialogue and rebuild trust. Multilateral agreements are the bedrock of disarmament. They come with important collective security gains, for example in the case of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), that must be preserved and further increased. Liechtenstein is confident, Mr. Chair, that under the able guidance of Amb. Bahr Al-Uloom we will make sure that this Committee can be a positive force for disarmament. We are particularly honored to support these efforts as member of the Bureau.

Mr. Chair,

The Secretary-General, the High Representative and many of our leaders have placed the nuclear threat at the top of our priorities. The world is indeed in concrete risk of living the horrors of a nuclear war. At the same time one of the founding purposes of the United Nations – the total elimination of nuclear weapons – is as far as ever from being achieved. The solemn promise enshrined in the disarmament obligations of the Non-Proliferation Treaty has been left unfulfilled by nuclear weapon States, mistaking responsibility for privilege. Our established formats have long been blocked from meaningful progress towards irreversible, verifiable and transparent nuclear disarmament. Against this background, Liechtenstein has strongly supported the establishment of a clear legal norm against nuclear weapons both as a complement to the existing disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and as a way to reinvigorate nuclear disarmament discussions. Liechtenstein has welcomed the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and signed it on the earliest opportunity. The normative reach of the Treaty's clear prohibition provisions will become stronger and compelling over time and, as a consequence, provide additional incentive for States to reduce stockpiles in their possession or on their territory. The Treaty extends a hand to these States, while strengthening and complementing the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Mr. Chair,

The sixth nuclear test of the DPRK, in clear and repeated violation of international law, has put the spotlight on another area where responsibility has too long been mistaken for privilege: the moratorium on nuclear testing. The respect of the prohibition of nuclear testing by all but one country is an achievement of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). At the same time, it is evident that the current status of the CTBT cannot be a permanent substitute to a *de jure* prohibition of nuclear testing. Those Annex II States that have not ratified the CTBT are responsible for the fact that the Treaty continues to be prevented from exerting its full legal and political potential. Here too, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, with its clear prohibition of testing, can contribute to an incremental strengthening of the current CTBT regime.

Mr. Chair,

The clear legal prohibition of weapons of mass destruction is an important step towards their elimination. Unfortunately, prohibition does not guarantee the non-use of such weapons as we have painfully witnessed with repeated chemical weapons attacks on the Syrian people. The use of chemical weapons is a blatant violation of international law and constitutes a grave breach of Syria's obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. There must be accountability for those responsible in order to provide justice to the victims and to deter future atrocities by using weapons of mass destruction. In this regard, Liechtenstein appreciates the important work carried out by the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). While the Security Council continues to remain silent on Syria we welcome the perspective for justice that the Syria Accountability Mechanism (IIIM) of the General Assembly provides in gathering and processing available information of mass atrocities, including using weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Chair,

Liechtenstein is concerned at the growing disrespect of international humanitarian law worldwide. Indiscriminate and disproportionate use of conventional weapons against civilian populations and the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and ports cause appalling suffering by civilian populations. This points as much to an accountability crisis as it underlines the need for stricter conventional arms control measures. Today's conflicts are often fueled by uncontrolled supplies of weapons. We call on States that have not done so to join the Arm Trade Treaty (ATT). The obligations enshrined in the ATT with regard to transparency, non-diversion and the respect of international human rights and humanitarian law provide an important, albeit minimum standard for States trading in conventional arms. We should continue to build on them and use their potential to establish confidence and trust between States.

Mr. Chair,

Our region Europe used to be a positive example how military confidence building can reduce tensions even at times of deep political and ideological divisions. Nowadays, we face an obvious trust deficit, have lost a number of valuable mutual commitments to transparency and military restraint and find ourselves in a new arms race. In this sensitive security environment Liechtenstein supports ongoing efforts in the OSCE to reengage in a structured dialogue on common security challenges. We hope that these efforts will eventually translate into de-escalation on the ground, in particular in the ongoing and protracted conflicts, and give way to a new security consensus based on the common set of principles that have successfully underpinned European security for decades. A new commitment to conventional arms control and disarmament could be an important building block in that regard.

I thank you.