



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

GENERAL ASSEMBLY, FIRST COMMITTEE

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS

STATEMENT BY MR. GEORG SPARBER

DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Chairperson,

Let me first express our gratitude to you and your team, as well as to the Secretary and her team, for the very diligent work that has gone into the preparation of this year's First Committee, under truly unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. The solid organizational set-up has not only been important for the First Committee, it also has been beneficial to other Committees in their preparations. We have full confidence in the Bureau to guide us to a successful conclusion of our work and Liechtenstein will support you in this regard as best we can.

Chairperson,

The First Committee's mandate encompasses disarmament and international security. This year it meets at a time when people have perhaps never felt more insecure - due to an ongoing pandemic, economic hardship, the impacts of climate change, and also – very significantly – due to an unprecedented unravelling of international law in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The world witnesses an increasingly unchecked arms race both in traditional and emerging areas as the increasingly aggressive postures of a few States negatively affect the

security of all others. Europe's security has been further weakened by the announced US withdrawal from the Open Skies Treaty, which is only the most recent in a line of now defunct arms control mechanisms. Outer space risks rapid militarization, to the detriment of the important peaceful uses of space-technology for sustainable development, information technology and connectivity. The flow of weapons into conflict areas continues unabated, at times in open violation of Security Council arms embargoes. At the same time, regional arms control agreements are under pressure. In reaction to these developments the First Committee is well advised to overcome its traditional silo thinking by recognizing the larger context in which security questions should be addressed in today's world. Legal agreements in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation form an integral part of the international legal framework. Their erosion has negative effects far beyond their field of application by challenging the fundamental principle of the rule of law in international relations. 75 years into the United Nations' existence it has become again urgent and necessary to recall that the primacy of the law and the prohibition of the use of force or its threat are the very core of the UN Charter.

Chairperson,

The area with most visibly and most rapidly eroding levels of security is nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The INF treaty is defunct, a new START extension remains an open question, and tensions over the JCPOA have reached another lamentable peak that, in addition to the precarious status of the agreement itself, risks undermining the integrity of the United Nations sanctions regime. The DPRK shows no signs to come into compliance with Security Council resolutions, let alone take verifiable steps towards nuclear disarmament, and the long-held taboo over the conduct of nuclear tests is publicly undermined. With every announcement of plans to stock-up and modernize nuclear arsenals and lower thresholds for their use, the Non-Proliferation Treaty's ultimate purpose fades further into the distance. The NPT once charted a course to eliminate nuclear weapons by making it illegal to acquire them. The lack of its implementation is read by some as an incentive to do the opposite. The nuclear arms race runs directly counter to the article VI obligations of nuclear weapon States and thereby also threatens the important gains achieved under the non-proliferation pillar. The balance that the NPT

originally represented has been continuously shifted in a way that threatens the integrity of the treaty as a whole. Restoring that balance should be the primary objective of the upcoming Review Conference. Liechtenstein will participate in the Conference with the aim to achieving a substantial result that builds on and does not backtrack from past agreements.

Chairperson,

Nuclear weapons are not only an existential threat to our planet, their existence is also an inherent challenge to the rule of law. The most fundamental principles of international humanitarian law – necessity, proportionality and distinction – leave no space for the most destructive and indiscriminate weapons of all. The highest legal authority, the International Court of Justice, in its landmark opinion of 1996 has advised States to that effect. Liechtenstein strongly supports the collective effort to outlaw nuclear weapons and is committed to ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons after having signed the Treaty at the earliest possibility. The Treaty's imminent entry into force will create a much-needed international legal norm against nuclear weapons, thereby changing the legal framework for nuclear disarmament for good and bringing it in line with regimes for other weapons of mass destruction.

Chairperson,

There are concerning trends of decreasing respect for international law applying to other weapons of mass destruction. The absolute prohibition of the use of chemical weapons is openly violated in the Syrian conflict, undermining one of the strongest norms of customary international law. At the same time, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons faces increasing political pressure for implementing its mandate. In addition, our societies witness a new and aggravated threat from chemical weapons in the civilian context, notably through the reported use of the severe nerve agents known as Novichoks that must be urgently and fully investigated with a view of bringing those responsible to justice. While there is a continued broad consensus that violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention have to be fully investigated and brought to justice, in practice many of these efforts face obstructionism and political attacks. In this difficult context Liechtenstein applauds the work of independent bodies

such as the Syria Accountability Mechanism (IIIM) and the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team for their concrete and thorough contributions to holding perpetrators to account.

Chairperson,

Recent years have seen an increasing militarization of cyberspace. Liechtenstein welcomes that cybersecurity is a solid part the First Committee agenda through its subsidiary bodies, the expertly chaired Open-Ended Working Group and the Group of Governmental Experts. Developments in artificial intelligence, pervasive data collection and manipulation, as well as militarized cyber-attacks against critical infrastructure including telecommunications networks, power grids, health programs as well as political and judicial systems undermine democratic norms and expose State institutions and their populations to great risk. The prohibition of the use of force, except when authorized by the Security Council or carried out in self-defense, must be enforced in all its dimensions, including in cyberspace. Despite a common understanding that international law, in particular the UN Charter, fully applies to cyberspace, activities by States and other actors to move the domain of warfare to cyberspace meet with little consequence. Liechtenstein has explored the role the International Criminal Court may play in the regulation of warfare as it evolves in the 21st century by creating a Council of Advisers on the Application of the Rome Statute to Cyberwarfare. The Council has extensively discussed how the Rome Statute's provisions defining the crimes under its jurisdiction, including the crime of aggression, apply to cyberattacks. The Council's final report is scheduled to be presented at the ICC Assembly of States Parties later this year.

Chairperson,

Liechtenstein supports a new regulatory framework for lethal autonomous weapons systems, in the form of legally binding standards to ensure a human component in the decision-making processes of such systems. An element of meaningful human control across the entire life cycle of lethal autonomous weapons systems is essential and helps to ensure compliance with applicable law, including international humanitarian law. The Alliance for Multilateralism has made an important political commitment to advance this agenda with its declaration on Lethal

Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), which Liechtenstein fully supports. In these times of strong nationalist tendencies and hostility towards cooperative and multilateralist approaches to disarmament, such initiatives are welcome vehicles to advance our common objectives. The history of the United Nations is shaped by coalitions of the willing – a reconciliatory perspective on the UN’s 75th anniversary against the difficult political odds of today.

I thank you