



**PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
NEW YORK**

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NEW YORK, 13 JULY 2016

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

HIGH LEVEL THEMATIC DEBATE UN@70 – HUMAN RIGHTS

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. CHRISTIAN WENAWESER**

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UN

Mr. President

At first glance, the history of human rights in the lifespan of the United Nations is an overwhelming success: The organization has adopted an impressive set of high quality standards, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was later on complemented by the International Covenants on Human Rights – whose adoption we will commemorate later this year. Some of these treaties have enjoyed **almost unprecedented success**, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in other areas, such as the abolition of the death penalty, progress has been steady. In parallel, we have built over time capacity within the United Nations system itself in a manner that is commensurate to this legal framework - the **Office of the High Commissioner**, one of the most meaningful additions to the UN system over the past two decades. Human rights were recognized as one of the pillars in the 2005 Summit outcome document – and the 2030 Agenda is deeply immersed in a spirit of human rights.

Even so, today is a day for **reflection rather than self-congratulation**: There are few areas where the gap between the existing legal standards and their implementation is as glaring as in the area of human rights – with all the monitoring and peer review mechanisms in place. Some of the most recent achievements are under attack –for example in the area of gender equality, where progress has been so important – and the systematic violation of and disregard for human rights continues in many places

of the world. This is accompanied by a deep crisis of implementation in the most important related area – **international humanitarian law**. The disregard for the standards for the rules of war has reached alarming levels – armed conflicts are characterized by the routine disregard for the most basic rules of international humanitarian law. That this goes hand in hand with massive and systematic violations of human rights goes without saying.

So while this is a moment to be self-critical, we have good reason to be optimistic: We have a strong basis to work from – and indeed all the tools necessary to make significant progress in our advancement of human rights.

- One of the most promising developments of the recent past has been the adoption of the **Rights Upfront initiative** by SG Ban ki-moon – in response to what the UN itself rightly called a “systemic failure” in connection with the conflict in Sri Lanka. The directive of the SG to all UN staff to prioritize the protection of human rights was a necessary step indeed. But it can only be effective if it is matched by a response by the intergovernmental bodies, in particular the Security Council. The **Code of Conduct on Mass Atrocities** for Security Council members is the response from the membership which promises to complement the SG’s initiative. We welcome the fact that 112 States have joined the Code of Conduct and hope to see as many others as possible do the same in the near future.
- We have seen a significant increase in the **demand for accountability and indeed for justice**. The most obvious development is the creation and operation of the **International Criminal Court**, the first independent, permanent, international institution with jurisdiction over the most serious crimes under international law. More than anything else, this should be an incentive for States to live up to their national responsibility to investigate and prosecute these crimes in their national courts. The UN system – from the Office of the High Commissioner to UNDP - can play a significant role in helping build national capacities and to thus help limit the ICC’s role to a few situations where national systems fail to do their work. Here again, intergovernmental bodies are called to task, not least the Peacebuilding Commission, as justice has been proven to be an indispensable part of reconciliation and thus of lasting and stable peace.

- Finally, all these points come together in what is certainly the single best opportunity for us to advance the effective protection of human rights: the 2030 Agenda. A central role in this regard certainly plays goal 16, dealing with the key components of the rule of law at the national level. In our view, this goal spans indeed across the full range of all the SDG's and indeed reflects the strong human rights spirit, in which the agenda as a whole is imbued.

We look forward to working closely with the rest of the membership to live up to the promise we have all made in the 2030 Agenda

I thank you.