



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

NEW YORK, 18 DECEMBER 2018

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

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

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Madame President,

Liechtenstein welcomes this meeting to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Declaration on human rights defenders. The Declaration is a landmark document which recognizes the central importance of the work of human rights defenders for the effective promotion and protection of all human rights. It makes the statement that, in addition to the obligation of States and the international community for the full realization of human rights, every human being, individually or collectively, has the right and responsibility to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Today also marks the fifth anniversary of the first ever UN Resolution on the Protection of Women Human Right Defenders which substantially complements the Declaration and significantly contributes to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Human rights defenders and civil society actors play an important and legitimate role in promoting and protecting human rights at the local, national, regional and international levels. They engage with Governments and assist in the implementation of the obligations and

commitments of States, including international human rights treaties. And they work to secure accountability for violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Liechtenstein's civil society actively contributes to the better protection of human rights, both at the national and international levels. Our National Human Rights Institution established in accordance with the Paris Principles is fully functional and contributes to awareness raising, public discourse and the respect of human rights. The All Survivors Project - the first international civil society organization based in Liechtenstein - conducts research, facilitates inter-disciplinary learning and undertakes advocacy to prevent and respond to sexual violence, including against men and boys, in situations of armed conflict and displacement. We are encouraged to see such engagement elsewhere and we welcome that the resources for the promotion and protection of human rights defenders within the United Nations, regional organizations and national systems have grown in the past two decades.

Madame President,

Much as we have to celebrate in looking at 20 successful years of the Declaration, there is also reason for concern at attempts to undermine or disregard it. We are disturbed by the increasing number of intimidations, threats, harassment and attacks against individuals, groups and associations, which contribute to the fight for the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by everyone. We are deeply disturbed that since the adoption of the Declaration, at least 3,500 human rights defenders have been killed for their role in the struggle for human rights. While women human right defenders are subject to the same types of risks as any human rights defender, they are disproportionately affected by gender-specific threats and violence, and often face hostility, stigmatization and ostracism. We strongly condemn reprisals against human rights defenders in retaliation for their engagement with international and regional human rights systems. There is a clear responsibility for the UN system to counter such reprisals, and we strongly support the work of the focal point established by the Human Rights Council. We are also deeply concerned about the increasing number of assaults against journalists who fight for human rights, including their arbitrary imprisonment and killing. Promoting the rights and

freedoms of all human right defenders, civil society actors and journalists, and combatting impunity for those who attack them must be a priority for each and every Member State and a central element of the work of the United Nations.

Today's celebration of the Declaration is a recognition of the sacrifices of human rights defenders, and we are glad that they are with us today.

I thank you.