



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

THIRD COMMITTEE

GENERAL DEBATE

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Chairperson,

30 years ago, Liechtenstein joined the United Nations, and the promotion and protection of human rights has been a key priority of our membership since. The Third Committee has played a central role for us. Liechtenstein chaired its 57th session, and it is honored to represent the Western European and Others Group in the Bureau again this year after an eight-year break. While the current pandemic has put us in an extraordinary and unprecedented situation, we are encouraged by the constructive approach of Member States to organize the work of the committee efficiently and in support of a successful conclusion of its anniversary session.

This year, we also commemorate the 75th anniversary of the UN Charter – a milestone for multilateralism, international cooperation and the rule of law. One of the purposes reflected in the Charter for the United Nations is to “promote and encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all”, soon after spelled out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which has now become customary international law. Several core treaties on human rights have followed. While the legal obligations of States to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms are clear, for too many their enjoyment remains utopic. The COVID-19

pandemic in particular has exposed and exacerbated profound inequalities and injustices around the globe. And it has further contributed to human rights protection gaps. The measures implemented by States to contain the pandemic have resulted in far-reaching and profound restrictions of our fundamental freedoms across the globe. It is therefore of paramount importance to ensure that they are necessary, proportionate, limited in time and fully reversible if the circumstances allow. Liechtenstein has benefitted in its COVID-19 response from exchanges with dedicated international human rights institutions and sees potential for the UN and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to step up such engagement with States. Transparent and accountable institutions and responsible political leadership are key to ensure trust in the population and implementation of restrictive measures. The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly illustrated why the commitment we jointly undertook with SDG 16 is a cornerstone for human rights protection and the 2030 Agenda, and is a blueprint to build back better. Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, including women's full and equal participation in decision making processes, is not only a human rights obligation but also necessary to build back better and to progress across all SDGs.

Liechtenstein is deeply concerned about measures to counter the pandemic that undermine human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to health, privacy and education, gender equality and core civil and political rights. We deplore responses to the pandemic that have further fueled and highlighted existing discrimination, racism and xenophobia. And we are concerned that women and girls in particular have been deprived of their rights and have experienced shadow pandemics – as frontline health and unpaid care workers and as victims and survivors of domestic and sexual and gender-based violence, online harassment and femicide, among others.

Our international response to the COVID-19 pandemic must be guided by solidarity, cooperation and the rule of law. We also need to ensure that fundamental rights and freedoms are protected at all times. Liechtenstein welcomes the unified message of solidarity and cooperation sent by the General Assembly in resolution 74/270, in support of the crucial role of the United Nations

in the global response to the pandemic. This Committee has a special role in our common response to the pandemic by virtue of key role in the promotion and protection of human rights. At the same time, more effective coordination and the mainstreaming of human rights within the United Nations system is urgently needed. Liechtenstein calls for stronger and more consistent links between Geneva and New York and for a more robust cooperation between the Human Rights Council and other main bodies of the UN, in particular the Security Council. Inevitably, the fulfillment of human rights and peace and security go hand in hand.

Chairperson,

It is often during armed conflicts that human rights are infringed upon the most. We remain concerned about ongoing human rights violations for instance in the Syrian Arab Republic and Myanmar: Sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary detention, torture and extrajudicial killings remain a sad reality for many. Millions of people have been displaced. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated their already inhuman and degrading living conditions. It is disappointing that the Security Council has failed to effectively and fully provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to people in need, let alone to address the crimes committed against victims and survivors of violations of international human rights law. This is an area where the General Assembly can step in, as it has in the past, for example by responding to the humanitarian emergency in the Syrian Arab Republic and by supporting pathways to justice.

We are particularly concerned about persisting impunity for such violations. Ensuring accountability is a necessary precondition for justice and peace, and it has an important prevention component. We continue to fully support the work by the accountability mechanisms established by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. They pave the way for accountability through national or international criminal justice mechanisms, in accordance with the principle of complementarity. The ICC, a centerpiece of a law based international order, provides the most concrete path to justice for victims of crimes against humanity, genocide, war crimes and crimes of aggression. It is disappointing that the Security Council continues to ignore

calls from States, the UN system and victims and survivors themselves for referrals to the ICC where States are unable or unwilling to ensure national investigations and prosecutions. We will continue to fight for accountability for human rights crimes in different fora and the Third Committee in particular must do its part to that end.

Chairperson,

The fight against modern slavery and human trafficking remains a core priority for Liechtenstein. The most recent report by the Secretary General documents that between 2017 and 2018 a total of almost 75'000 victims of trafficking alone were detected in over 110 countries. Trafficking and slavery clearly are global phenomena, and one of the world's most profitable criminal activities. They persist because they are high-reward and low-risk crimes owing to the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators. The current COVID-19 pandemic, the wider inequality gap and the resulting economic impact further increase vulnerability to trafficking and slavery. With the transition to more online activities as a response to the pandemic, traffickers are increasingly using online technology to recruit and exploit victims, which makes the crime – and the fight against it – even more complex.

Liechtenstein has contributed to this fight with a public-private partnership initiative “Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking” (FAST) and its blueprint for financial actors to help eradicate slavery, such as through the promotion of sustainable and innovative financing, responsible lending and investment, as well as compliance and regulation. The General Assembly, and in particular its Third Committee, Special Procedures created by the Human Rights Council, as well as the Security Council can play an important role in disseminating the blueprint.

Chairperson,

The right to self-determination also remains a key priority for us. Self-determination is a cornerstone of the UN Charter, as well as a prerequisite for the full enjoyment of human rights, in accordance with Common Article 1 of the twin human rights covenants and General Comment

12 of the Human Rights Committee. Accordingly, we – and this Committee in particular – have a collective responsibility to address self-determination challenges to enable the promotion and protection of human rights. Many of the world’s conflicts have a self-determination dimension and we will soon release a handbook on the “Prevention and Resolution of Self-Determination Conflicts”, emphasizing the potential of the right of self-determination to defuse and prevent conflict. In addition, the international community should place stronger emphasis on new and emerging threats to self-determination, in particular due to climate change and its effects such as rising sea levels or the loss of livelihoods and sustenance.

Chairperson,

The Human Rights treaties are a crown achievement of the United Nations’ successful treaty making history. Liechtenstein continues to fully support the work of the Treaty Bodies and is committed to further strengthen them, including through promoting the full and effective implementation of resolution 68/268 and by providing adequate financing. The first part of the review earlier this year provided a welcome opportunity to that end. The system’s effectiveness and independence, including impartiality of treaty body members, remains a key priority for us as the discussions continue this session.

We furthermore continue to support the important work of the Human Rights Council. Resolution 60/251 clearly defines the criteria for the quality of HRC Members. The upcoming elections provide yet another opportunity for Member States to support those candidates who uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights we have collectively agreed upon. We thank civil society for organizing relevant hearings and exchanges with candidates to increase transparency of their aspirations. The work done by these actors is indispensable for the functioning and effectiveness of the UN Human Rights system, and reprisals both online and offline against them undermine the system and are unacceptable.

The UN system can only fully and effectively deliver on its human rights mandate with the necessary financial means. The financial situation of OHCHR is unsustainable and unacceptable.

We regret that while approximately half of all regular budget resources are directed to the three pillars of the United Nations, only a tiny percentage of the regular budget is allocated to human rights. In 2019, voluntary contributions represented almost two thirds of the UN human rights overall budget. However, in order to implement its mandate greater financial support to the OHCHR from Member States is urgently needed, and Liechtenstein will again work towards that end in the Fifth Committee.

I thank you.