



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

ARRIA-FORMULA MEETING ON RAISING EFFECTIVENESS OF ATROCITY CRIMES PREVENTION:

ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL AND ITS MEMBERS

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER

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Madame President

Today I have the honor to speak on behalf of Austria, Costa Rica, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Luxemburg, Slovenia, and my own country Liechtenstein.

We commend you for convening this meeting. Indeed, this is a suitable format to commemorate the adoption of the Genocide Convention, one of the early achievements of the United Nations in the area of international treaty-making. And it serves as an important reminder of the role of the Security Council to prevent and end genocide as well as other atrocity crimes – crimes against humanity and war crimes.

When atrocity crimes are committed, the global public has a strong expectation for the Security Council to take effective action to end these crimes. But all too frequently, these expectations are not met. In fact, the most notorious failures in the history of the Security Council – and by implication the UN as an organization – are connected with the genocides in Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia, in particular Srebrenica. If these two situations still stand out, history is unlikely to judge the Council's lack of action with respect to the crimes committed in Syria, Myanmar and in Yemen more mildly. Massive as the fallout from the failures in the 90's was,

genuine as pledges „never again !“ may have been, the reality is that we are doing no better now than back then.

Madame President

A discussion on the past and current failures inevitably leads to reflection on the veto – the ability of the five permanent members of the Security Council to single-handedly block action by the Council. The Council’s poor record on Syria in particular is marked by action frustrated by the use of the veto – no fewer than 13 times in seven years. But the veto also has had an insidious negative effect where it was not resorted to. Very often the threat of the veto is sufficient to thwart action, and whether the blocking permanent member is forced to show its cards in public is often a matter of political expediency rather than substance.

In ratifying the UN Charter, all of us have accepted the existence of the veto – albeit in various cases after complex domestic discussions. That, however, does not mean that we interpret this as a carte blanche to block proposed action that is conducive to achieving the purposes of the UN Charter. Ending and preventing mass atrocities in particular is a key function that we – and the peoples around the globe – expect the Council to fulfil. The membership has thus reacted strongly in recent years in order to remind the Council of our collective expectation in this respect.

We have supported the French-Mexican initiative aimed at a voluntary restraint of the use of the veto in the case of mass atrocity crimes. But we see little movement on the part of the three permanent members who have not joined this commitment yet. We also believe that the pledge to fight atrocity crimes should be more comprehensive: the commitment not to vote against a draft resolution should be accompanied by a positive pledge to take action to prevent and end these crimes. This is the substance of the ACT Code of Conduct on Mass Atrocity Crimes: 119 States have already made the political commitment to do so when they serve as Council members, most recently Ecuador whom we welcome warmly as part of our constituency. We call

on all States who have not done so yet to join this initiative – we can soon reach the two thirds threshold of UN membership which will be a landmark in our effort to make Council action more effective and more accountable.

An important aspect of the code of Conduct is the role of the UN Secretariat: For the Council to act in a timely and effective manner, submission of relevant information by the UN system is crucial. We will therefore continue our dialogue with the Secretariat to enhance the dialogue and exchange of information in this respect.

Madame President

It is not enough to lament the destructive effect of the veto which has paralyzed the Council time and again. The current political dynamic in the Council makes it clear that we cannot realistically expect improvements in this respect, unless the rest of the membership, on whose behalf the Council carries out its tasks, voices its disagreement and charters alternative courses of action, including in the General Assembly.

I thank you.