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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SECURITY COUNCIL - OPEN DEBATE ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

**WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE
STATEMENT BY MYRIAM OEHRI, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE**

Mr. President,

We welcome today's debate on the participation pillar of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda that has had immense impact on the ground since its inception more than two decades ago. In many parts of the world women are key agents of political change and contribute to sustainable peace – as peacekeepers, mediators, lawyers and journalists among others. Their inclusion in peace talks has proven indispensable for lasting peace agreements, and they have played crucial roles in humanitarian settings. On this note, we welcome the first female President of the ICRC, Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, as well as the ICRC's important gender-sensitive lens under her leadership. The recent escalation in the Gaza war underlines the need to ensure full respect of international humanitarian law, and specifically the protection of civilians, at all times, as well as to meet the special needs of women and girls in armed conflict. Despite important achievements in the implementation of the WPS participation pillar worldwide, women's equal, full and meaningful participation remains the exception rather than the rule. Often among the most active agents of change at grassroots level, they routinely face discriminatory practices that exclude them from the more formal processes such as peace talks and negotiations. Translating the WPS agenda from theory into practice means empowering actors whose legitimate claim for participation continues to be neglected and ignored. To do so, we must listen to, invest in and include women in all decision-making processes, in line with the recommendations by the New

Agenda for Peace and the New Vision for the Rule of Law. Looking ahead, we must ensure that the Pact for the Future recognizes and further promotes women's critical role in global disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. President,

Women Human Rights Defenders [, like the civil society briefer today,] are in the frontlines of the fight for women's rights in conflict and post-conflict situations. They operate in the hyper-masculinized context of war to push against centuries of discrimination and violence faced by women and girls. By documenting violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law, they contribute to accountability and justice, as well as to peace processes that pay due attention to gender. In her most recent report, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders underscores the critical work of women in Yemen, Syria and Myanmar in this regard. Due to their pivotal engagement for human rights, gender equality, reproductive health and LGBTI rights, however, they face elevated risks of reprisals and violence. Despite the advancement in the implementation of the WPS agenda, the international community has made little progress to better protect human rights defenders in conflict-affected settings. Liechtenstein condemns the increasing attacks on, and reprisals faced by, women human rights defenders and deplores any attempt to obliterate their important contribution to just, sustainable and lasting peace.

Mr. President,

As recognized by the Secretary-General's report, women in politics, too, face online and offline abuse, harassment or violence at an alarming rate; a phenomenon that sadly affects women at all levels of political engagement and in all parts of the world, including our own region. According to a study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union among female Members of Parliament in Europe, for instance, over half have been the target of sexist attacks online, while almost one fourth had suffered sexual violence in the course of their term in office. Protecting women from intimidation and violence is a key factor in their empowerment and enables them to play an active role as agents of change. Only by so doing can we achieve equal representation of women in positions

of leadership that is a basic prerequisite for a peaceful, just and inclusive world.

I thank you.