



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
63TH SESSION

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madam President,

By adopting the 2030 Agenda, we have made an unequivocal commitment to gender equality – both as an end in itself and as an indispensable tool for sustainable development. And yet, women and girls are often left behind: They are excluded from social protection systems, are denied access to public services, including access to justice, and cannot benefit from sustainable infrastructure. The Commission of the Status of Women has an important role to play in promoting equal access in these areas and in empowering women as agents in achieving the 2030 Agenda. Allow me to elaborate on relevant links between this year's theme and the 2030 Agenda with regard to three areas: access to education, access to justice, and the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking.

In SDG 4 we committed to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Education is a human right, a public good and a responsibility of the State. Yet, many women and girls around the world are not guaranteed equal access to education and in fact are often denied it. According to UNESCO estimates, 130 million girls between the age of six and 17 are out of school, and 15 million girls of primary-school age – half of them in sub-Saharan Africa – will never enter a classroom. Girls face barriers to education which are caused by poverty, cultural norms and practices, including harmful gender stereotyping, poor infrastructure, violence and fragility.

Women and girls who are lucky enough to enjoy access to education often face discriminatory structures jeopardizing their equal and full participation. Gender stereotypes remain ingrained in educational curricula and practices, which shape career choices and employment outcomes. While women outnumber men among university graduates in most countries, they continue to be a minority among science, technology, engineering and mathematics graduates. In fact, women represent less than 30% of researchers worldwide, and the gender gap in science continues to widen. Evidence suggests that access to quality education and full participation in science promote women's empowerment and help develop the skills, information and knowledge that are needed to support their labour market entry, including better-remunerated employment options, livelihoods, well-being and resilience.

In order to promote equal opportunities and break up gender stereotypes in the education system, Liechtenstein launched in 2017 an experimentation laboratory called pepperMINT – MINT standing for mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology. While the laboratory aims at bringing the attention of both boys and girls to scientific and technical careers, one of its main goal is to support girls in deepening their interest in STEM disciplines. Starting already at the kindergarten level, the pepperMINT laboratory helps children better understand and enjoy STEM subjects. It also provides insights into STEM professions and STEM career choices for girls. pepperMint is based on a gender-sensitive educational approach and employs only young female teachers in order to promote female STEM-role-models.

We hope that with these measures we can contribute to the full and equal participation of women in science. Only if we hear the voices of all and acknowledge women's and girls' necessary contributions to science, technology and innovation, can we address today's challenges and achieve peace and security, human rights and sustainable development, as enshrined in the 2030 Agenda.

Madam President,

Many women and girls around the world lack the necessary education which reduces their opportunities to be informed of their rights. They face structural inequalities, poverty and discrimination that deny them access to justice – in their capacities as claimants, victims, witnesses or offenders. Absence of the rule of law, discriminatory laws and practices, including gender bias and stereotyping, and indifference and corruption prevent them from enjoying full and equal protection under the law and achieving just outcomes for violations committed against them, including all forms of discrimination and violence against them. To enable women to fully enjoy their rights, to be agents of change and to contribute to more peaceful, just and inclusive societies, we need to create an environment that is enabling, and free of discrimination, unfair social norms and attitudes. It also requires the creation of effective, accountable and gender-responsive justice systems.

Women remain unevenly represented in transitional justice and rule of law institutions. We notice a particularly grave inequality in some UN-bodies, including the International Residual

Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals and the International Law Commission. At the same time we applaud the ICC-Assembly of States Parties which has led by example by establishing minimum voting requirements that ensures gender representation, in addition to diversity in other areas.

Only if we address these disparities can we achieve SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 10 on reduced inequalities and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

Madam President,

Modern Slavery and human trafficking are among the biggest human rights scandals of our times. While there is an estimated 40 million people living in modern slavery, women and girls are disproportionately affected. They make up the majority of victims of commercial sexual exploitation. They are exploited for forced labour and forced marriage. And they are trafficked for the purpose of organ removal, among other crimes. There can be no doubt that modern slavery and human trafficking are among the most brutal forms of marginalization and social exclusion. It prevents victims from accessing social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure. Modern slavery and human trafficking are also one of the most lucrative illegal business models which generates 150 billion USD in revenues every year and thereby nourishes the informal economy.

The need to strengthen cooperation among all relevant actors to identify and disrupt illicit financial flows stemming from modern slavery and human trafficking has been widely expressed, including by the G7, the G20, the UN Security Council (Resolution 2331) and, not least, by the General Assembly. The “Liechtenstein Initiative” for a Financial Sector Commission against Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking which we launched during the General Debate in 2018 responds to these calls. It is a public-private partnership, jointly developed by our Government and United Nations University, and in partnership with the Governments of Australia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as well as a consortium of Liechtenstein banks, Liechtenstein philanthropic foundations, the Liechtenstein banking association and other partners. Our Foreign Minister Aurelia Frick, together with Foreign Minister of Australia Marise Payne and Prof. Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Laureate, serve as co-convenors of the Commission, which is composed by actors from retail banks, hedge funds, global regulators, institutional

investors, survivors as well as the UN and the anti-slavery movement. The Commission is working on a report which will comprise a set of concrete measures for the global financial sector to tackle illicit financial flows of modern slavery and human trafficking. The report will be launched in the margins of the next General Debate and we invite you all to attend this event.

We are confident that with the “Liechtenstein Initiative” we can make a meaningful contribution to the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking – which are particularly pressing on the shoulders of women and girls and immensely complex and multifaceted phenomena reflected in no less than three SDG targets of the 2030 Agenda.

I thank you.