



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

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

THIRD COMMITTEE

ITEM 67: RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION

STATEMENT BY MR. MATTHEW EDBROOKE, POLITICAL COORDINATOR

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Madam Chair,

Liechtenstein is a strong supporter of the right to self-determination, which is a cornerstone of the UN Charter and a prerequisite for the full enjoyment of human rights. Today we will focus on one of our long-standing initiatives, on how a broader understanding of self-determination can inform conflict prevention and resolution efforts.

Madam Chair,

While many States associate the right to self-determination with decolonization and Statehood – which of course remains one of the UN’s shining achievements – self-determination is relevant in any process by which a community is able to freely determine its political status, as noted in the UN ‘Friendly Relations Declaration’. The explicit references to self-determination in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is one example of how the concept can and should apply beyond the decolonization paradigm. Instead, Liechtenstein has long noted that many conflicts around the world begin when communities within States seek a greater degree of internal self-determination, including autonomy, self-governance, or self-administration.

Madam Chair,

A better understanding of how calls for internal self-determination can drive emerging tensions and conflict can therefore go a long way to preventing the deterioration of such situations into armed conflict and secession, as well as making sure that conflicts over self-determination do not recur once an active phase of conflict has ended. Indeed, studies such as the UN-World Bank Pathways for Peace report note that, “[s]elf-governance arrangements such as federalism have proven effective in many cases in reducing local violent conflict”. Forms of self-governance, decentralization and devolution of powers can also contribute to upholding SDG 16.7 which aims at responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. While we appreciate that this topic can be controversial, we believe that better understanding of the relationship between self-determination and conflict can assist in building sustainable peace.

Madam Chair,

A fuller understanding of self-determination also helps us to highlight where relevant principles are being abused. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Russian aggression against Ukraine, in which it has repeatedly imposed secession claims on communities without giving them the opportunity to “freely determine their political status” as required under international law, with the effect of undermining Ukraine’s territorial integrity.

Madam Chair,

Last year, Liechtenstein produced a “Handbook on Self-Determination in Conflict Prevention and Resolution”. The handbook sets out a range of practices for States, mediators and other key actors interested in preventing and resolving ‘self-determination conflicts’, as well as case studies. It encourages relevant actors to uphold the human rights of minority communities as a means of conflict prevention, to seek inclusive and early dialogue, and to consider forms of self-determination short of secession, where they take place outside of the contexts of decolonization and occupation. We thank in particular the Special Rapporteur on minority issues for citing the Handbook in his recent report on “Conflict prevention through the protection of the human rights of minorities”. Liechtenstein stands ready to further engage with Member States and all other interested parties on the Handbook. I thank you.