



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

GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THIRD COMMITTEE

STATEMENT BY GEORG SPARBER, FIRST SECRETARY

ITEM 69 B/C: PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Chairman,

The war in Syria is the most urgent human rights crisis of our time. Liechtenstein welcomes the fact that the Security Council at last agreed on the destruction of all chemical weapons in Syria; sadly only after they have caused so many deaths. We all know, however, that the right to life of countless civilians in Syria continues to be threatened and violated every day by conventional weapons and by the arbitrariness with which the Syrian Government restricts access for humanitarian actors. The inaction by the Security Council to curtail the supply of conventional weapons to the parties to the conflict is hardly comprehensible. Syria is also a sad showcase of how a climate of pervading impunity contributes to the escalation of violence and to the disregard of even the most basic rules of war and human rights. At least one party to the conflict, the Syrian National Coalition, has publicly supported a referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court. Liechtenstein welcomes this position as a commitment by the leadership of the Coalition to abide by the provisions of the Rome Statute. In this regard, Liechtenstein also draws the attention of the Coalition to the possibility of a self-referral to the Court, in accordance with article 12.3 of its Statute, which would allow the Coalition to make that commitment even more clearly.

Mr. Chairman,

The political response of the international community to the crisis in Syria is painfully slow and clearly insufficient. For too long gross and systematic human rights violations and violations to international

humanitarian law have been condoned by a climate of political stalemate. 20 years ago, at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the international community agreed that human rights shall be a priority objective for the United Nations as it recognized their contribution to peace, stability and prosperity. Yet, we still seem to perceive the protection of human rights as a luxury in times of crisis. And we still seem to perceive accountability for human rights violations as secondary to achieving political and security objectives. This perception has proven shortsighted many times, including in very recent history. Protecting human rights is never more important than in times of crisis. In fact, international human rights law has primarily been developed as a safeguard for individuals in such times. Moreover, disregarding fundamental rights and freedoms constitutes a breeding ground for further political instability. In the long term only policies firmly rooted on the respect for fundamental rights and freedoms contribute to stable and inclusive societies and peaceful coexistence. This is a key lesson learnt in the 20 years since the Vienna Conference. It is a lesson that we should also have in mind when designing the new global development agenda with the overriding aim to eliminate poverty and hunger once and for all from our planet.

Mr. Chairman,

20 years after Vienna the United Nations still needs to properly mainstream human rights as a priority objective of the organization. It has to take a serious look at past and current failures to react clearly and strongly to gross human rights violations. The report of the internal review panel on United Nations action in Sri Lanka states that the United Nations has failed Sri Lankan civilians in the final phase and the aftermath of the 2009 civil war. It concludes that when confronted by similar situations the organization must be able to meet a much higher standard in fulfilling its protection and humanitarian responsibilities. Liechtenstein welcomes and supports the process under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General to identify measures to prevent such failures in the future and looks forward to the publication of the relevant action plan. An essential element of improved United Nations action must be clear and uncompromised advocacy for human rights and accountability. We live at a time when impunity must no longer be an option – not for Sri Lanka, nor for Syria or any other situation where gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law have been or are being committed. Ensuring accountability against the odds of political obstructionism can be a tedious process that needs sustained political effort from the United Nations and in particular from those member States to whom the Charter attributes particular responsibilities. Even an improved Secretariat cannot make up for a lack of political will to address human rights emergencies as we have painfully experienced for more than

two years now in Syria. Liechtenstein therefore urges the five veto powers to refrain from blocking Security Council action in light of mass atrocities in the future and to make a public commitment to that effect. The proposal by the President of France to develop a Code of Conduct on the use of the veto is a very welcome expression of such a commitment.

Mr. Chairman,

The preventive dimension of the promotion and protection of human rights continues to be undervalued in the United Nations. With the corpus of the main United Nations human rights treaties and their additional protocols there is a substantive normative framework for the promotion and protection of human rights in place. The treaty bodies to these instruments all have a specific mandate to independently monitor and facilitate the implementation of this framework into domestic law. For Liechtenstein their work lies at the core of the United Nations mandate. For much too long, the General Assembly has tolerated that the human rights treaty bodies are effectively prevented from fully implementing their mandates by resourcing them at a level that has in some cases not seen substantive adjustments for decades despite significant increases in treaty ratifications. The intergovernmental process on strengthening the treaty body system will have the opportunity to correct this negligence. Liechtenstein is of the view that the positions expressed in the course of this process allow for a comprehensive and substantive outcome by February 2014. Only such a comprehensive outcome can achieve a good balance between increased efficiency and sustainable funding for the treaty body system while allowing the Secretariat to provide the assistance that States want to improve compliance with their obligations. Until then this Committee has to live up to its responsibility to address the most urgent needs of individual treaty bodies. It would be a major disappointment for Liechtenstein if we had to take recourse to such emergency measures also in the years to come.