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OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

I congratulate you on your election to the helm of the General Assembly, the most important policy-making body in the world. The future must be shaped by the best ideas, not the loudest voices, and by those who are committed to the purposes and principles of this organization. Small States have always had an intrinsic understanding of that, and I am deeply convinced of the value added that States like ours bring to the United Nations and to the work of this Assembly in particular.

Mr. President

I wish to address the plight of the people of Afghanistan, given the immense humanitarian tragedy that has been unfolding in the country in the last few weeks. We pay tribute to all those who have worked bravely and with conviction towards a peaceful and safe future for the country, in particular the women and girls who have been fighting for their full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. We call upon those who effectively exercise control to fully respect their rights and freedoms, especially the rights to quality education and work as well as freedom of movement. The people of Afghanistan live now in a very precarious position. And they are looking at us and at the United Nations as an organization to support them. We will continue to stand with them, call for the full respect for their human rights and fundamental freedoms and ask that the United Nations lives up to its historic responsibility in this terrible and dangerous crisis of human security.

Mr. President

As we gather in the General Assembly hall – the symbol for multilateralism and the sovereign equality of States – the Covid-19 pandemic continues to loom large. We are meeting under restricted and difficult circumstances here in New York. Our way of living together across the globe is heavily affected, as are our lives as individuals. The pandemic knows no geographic boundaries. We all know that we can only be successful if we work together. Solidarity is simply also a matter of self-interest. Yet, the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, both within and among societies. Women and children and those in economically weak positions have been hit hardest. Time and again, we have been saying that ensuring access to vaccination for all is the only way to protect ourselves from the pandemic. And yet, we continue falling short of reaching this goal. Liechtenstein will continue to invest in the United Nations system to play a key role in addressing the ongoing pandemic, in helping us prepare better for future ones, and ideally in preventing them altogether. Eighteen months into the Covid-19 pandemic, we are still uncertain where we stand and must be prepared for setbacks. And this in spite of the fact that the scientific community has responded at impressive speed and developed an effective vaccine in record time. Globally, the support for Covax, to which Liechtenstein has also made its contribution, has so far not been sufficient to bring about access to the vaccine to all. This is not just an obligation vis-à-vis those who are in economically disadvantaged positions, but also the investment we all need to make.

Mr. President

The pandemic has brought home forcefully the need for us to take decisive action - and to do so with the highest sense of urgency. First among the challenges facing us is the ever more dramatic climate crisis. Both the climate change related catastrophes of the past months and the most recent report of the International Panel on Climate Change make it brutally clear that we have very little time left to reverse the downward spiral and to meet our obligations to future generations, to humankind as a whole. We are heartened by the return to a comprehensive multilateralist approach, evidenced by the enhanced support for the Paris Climate Agreement. This of course is just the bare minimum required for us to make progress together, and to do so quickly. We are looking at those whose engagement is indispensable for us to turn the tide. But the Liechtenstein Government is also strongly committed to do its part to help preserve a livable and healthy planet for future generations, knowing that our people, in particular our youth, expect us to be ambitious and decisive. We are proud to lead the world on solar power per capita and take this as an encouragement to increase sustainability in other areas too. The upcoming COP26 in Glasgow is the ultimate test for our collective resolve. I sincerely hope that we will be able to pass it together. For the Glasgow meeting to be a success, it must bring a true breakthrough and a paradigm shift in the prevailing dynamic which is playing for time that we all know we do not have.

Mr. President

Climate action stands out among the Sustainable Development Goals reflected in the 2030 Agenda, the biggest standard setting agreement of the United Nations

in its recent history. But it is rightly part of the comprehensive agenda we have set for ourselves. Environmental, social and corporate governance have taken a key place in the discussion on policy-making as well as in the private sector. Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAST), one of Liechtenstein's key SDG projects places a strong emphasis on the social and corporate governance dimension. FAST is a public-private partnership embedded in the UN system, places financial institutions at the heart of the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking – in the areas of compliance, responsible investment and financial innovation. Having achieved much more than we had hoped for, FAST is expanding its reach in the effort to work for dissemination and implementation. Enhancing partnerships for FAST will remain a key objective of Liechtenstein's engagement for the 2030 agenda.

Mr. President

Since its very inception, the United Nations has stood for the rule of law, the belief in the necessity for international law to govern the relations between States but also between States and individuals. State institutions must be accountable and inclusive. We all have agreed to that in the SDGs. At the same time, people have a fundamental right to participate in decision-making processes, either directly or through free and fair election of their representation. This is the principal tenet of democracy that Liechtenstein will defend against authoritarian tendencies and promote as a safeguard against the abuse of power, also against the background of the 100th anniversary of our constitution. A look at many of the crisis situations around the world illustrate clearly the need for accountability, of which international criminal justice is an indispensable part. Be it the over a decade-long

armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic or the universally condemned coup in Myanmar by an unaccountable military regime – the prevalence of impunity not only leads to new atrocity crimes, but it also makes sustainable peace and thus development impossible. In the area of international criminal justice, the International Criminal Court (ICC) continues to be the key institution. The ICC deserves our full support, and I am proud that Liechtenstein has been a consistent advocate for the court since the very beginning. We will continue that important work, for the victims and survivors, for the rule of law and democracy, for the atrocities that the ICC's very existence has deterred and will deter in the future. I am encouraged by the developments in the Sudan which illustrate in the clearest possible way two things: First, justice may be a long time coming, especially for those in the most powerful positions. And second, justice is a key ingredient for any society to turn the page on a dark past and move forward with hope, legitimacy and the full support both of its own people and of the international community. Both these aspects have also driven our initiative to create the triple IM for Syria, which has boosted the principle of universal jurisdiction and until today represents the most concrete pathway to justice for the Syrian people.

Mr. President

When we talk about enhancing institutions and the rule of law, we have to start at our own doorstep. The drafters of the United Nations Charter have shown great vision and leadership in setting principles for a peaceful and prosperous world, where the rule of law and individual freedom prevails, peoples determine their own faith and disputes are solved amicably. They are as valid and pertinent as 76 years ago. Unfortunately, the practices and processes of the United Nations do

not always lend themselves to implement these principles. We often find ourselves in a situation where our actions or lack thereof are in clear conflict with those principles. Such situations include massive violations of international law, especially the law of war and human rights – the very fabric of our rules-based international order – while the political bodies of the United Nations remain silent.

Mr. President

This Assembly must take responsibility and step forward in such situations, as it has done in the past at times. The General Assembly should also convene as a matter of course in each and every case when the Security Council action has been blocked by a veto. Liechtenstein will pursue this idea with interested States, as one concrete contribution to enhance accountability in the institutions of the United Nations. There are of course many more areas in urgent need of reform, in particular the Security Council, and Liechtenstein will continue to make its independent voice heard where needed. We also look forward to an energized second term in office of Secretary-General Guterres, in the service of an inclusive, powerful and effective multilateralism and of “Our Common Agenda”.

We should aspire to deliver on this basis by building the six bridges the Secretary-General has identified – for all of us and the peoples of the world.

I thank you.