



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
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**UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 73RD SESSION
GENERAL DEBATE**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. Ms. AURELIA FRICK
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great joy and personal satisfaction to me to see a woman preside over this Assembly. It is the tenth time that I have the honor to speak in this historic hall. And it is the first time in all those years that a woman holds the highest office here at the United Nations. I salute your leadership – and we will support you. But it is also disappointing to see that the UN – which should be a trailblazer on the empowerment of women – so frequently misses opportunities to make appointments that resonate outside this building. All the more, I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his commitment to gender parity. His resolve has illustrated that this goal is achievable – and relatively quickly. We have yet to realize full gender equality in practice back home, in Liechtenstein. And we will continue looking at the UN for setting examples that guide us on our own path.

Madam President

The United Nations is the most important peace project the world has ever seen. The UN has shaped the way we have lived together for over seven decades. It was created out of the belief that the world could not afford another armed confrontation of the most powerful States, with devastating consequences for everybody. It was created on the basis of a collective system for the maintenance of international peace and security – based on common values and common purposes.

The early years of the work of the United Nations illustrate the enthusiasm with which States seized the opportunity they had created for themselves. There was a strong focus on the most painful open wounds caused in World War II. The true dimensions of the horror of the Holocaust gradually became public knowledge, not least through the trials in Nuremberg. As a result, the Genocide Convention was adopted. Under the vivid impressions of the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the General Assembly – in its very first resolution – set the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons. That is a goal we are far from achieving, and the path has so far been rough. But we have finally chartered the way forward – in adopting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons last year. I congratulate the 19 countries which have already ratified the treaty. We will do our best to follow suit.

The United Nations has also been the place where we developed human rights standards – the rules that guide the relationship between the State and the human person, individually and collectively. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was at the beginning of this inspiring trajectory. Eleanor Roosevelt, one of my personal rolemodels, made a decisive contribution to its conclusion. 70 years later, there can be no question that every individual on this planet is entitled to enjoy all the rights reflected in it. An impressive number of groundbreaking treaties were built on this basis – a very proud record. More than anything else, the human rights area reflects the spirit of the UN Charter - written on behalf of the peoples, not on behalf of Governments.

Development became another key mission in this building. In fact, for many in the membership, the United Nations is the most important platform in this respect. This as well is an agenda that we shaped together – we agreed on the right to development. And we made it clear that development, human rights and peace and security belong together. The coronation of this effort are the Sustainable Development Goals that will guide our work until 2030. They offer a historic opportunity. We owe it to our children not to miss it.

The challenge of climate change illustrates perfectly clear that the United Nations is the indispensable organization. We ourselves have created a threat to our sheer existence - as the human race, as individuals. This threat knows no national borders, makes no distinction. We are all equally affected. We can only overcome it together. Our very survival is at stake. And yet, we are significantly behind what is necessary to do. The Secretary-General is right to sound the alarm. It is his responsibility. It is up to us – all of us – to act.

Madam President

All of this can only lead to one conclusion: We need more United Nations, not less – more effective, more cooperative, more dynamic, more in tune with the times we live in. And yet, we are distracted in this effort. There are tendencies to revert to a paradigm that led to enormous suffering in the past – and would certainly be disastrous today. Willful blindness, ignoring the realities, denying the facts and appealing to fear and resentment are recipes for disaster. We have witnessed a downward spiral in this conversation. It has been rapid and led us to

a point today where the fundamentals of what we have created together are under attack.

Madam President

The Charter is our main reference point when we reflect on the most pressing challenges of today. The following paragraph from the preamble stands out this year: “We the peoples of the United Nations determined ... to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained”. Today more than ever, we are challenged in our determination to do just this. Today, we can no longer take it for granted that these conditions exist. The questioning of international agreements and norms in the areas of trade, climate change, disarmament, migration, human rights has one common thread: It undermines not just the contents of those agreements. It is an attack on the rules-based order as such. It runs contrary to the pledge that we are all committed to under the UN Charter: respect for obligations under international law.

Madam President

Overwhelming support for the international rules based order has been expressed in the course of this debate. This gives us hope and inspiration to tackle the challenges we are facing. To be clear: We need to work harder to make the UN fit for purpose. Most importantly, we still have a Security Council that is least functional when it is most needed. While addressing our weaknesses we must also make better use of our strengths, in particular the

power of this Assembly. It has the legal and political authority to build institutions and set policies that are game changers.

Madam President

One such institution is the accountability mechanism for Syria. We were proud to lead the way to the creation of the IIM two years ago. Born out of the frustration over the deadlock in the Security Council, it has quickly become a symbol of what this Assembly can achieve – and a beacon of hope for Syria. At this critical moment in the Syrian conflict, our resolve to ensure accountability for the crimes committed will shape the future of the country.

A very different situation confronts us with a similar massive accountability challenge: The atrocities committed against the Rohingya population by the authorities in Myanmar are shocking to all of us. There can be no voluntary return of the hundreds of thousands forcibly displaced into Bangladesh unless we ensure a credible accountability process. We now have a direct path to justice, because the International Criminal Court has ruled that it can exercise jurisdiction over the crime of forced deportation. This creates a new and expeditious policy option for the 123 States among us which have joined the Rome Statute: We can come together and refer the situation in Cox's Bazaar to the ICC. I hope that this conversation will take place here in New York over the next few weeks.

Madam President

From Syria to Myanmar to Venezuela, the International Criminal Court is at the center of the effort to fight impunity. Its creation 20 years ago was perhaps the most important advance in the recent history of international law. It fulfilled a vision that had eluded us for a century. And today, it is an institution that is imperfect – but more importantly: It is indispensable. It is telling that at a time of a generic questioning of a rules-based order, the ICC finds itself under particular attack, from different sides. More than ever, we need this Court. And more than ever, we must be ready to stand up for it.

Madam President

The issue of modern slavery and human trafficking is one that is particularly disturbing to the Liechtenstein Government. Seventy years ago, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we agreed that “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude”. Today, over 40 million people, predominantly women and girls, live in these conditions. This is unacceptable. We have joined forces with our partners from Australia and from UNU and created the Financial Sector Commission (FSC). Its task is to design a response for actors in the financial sector to help eliminate modern slavery and to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. I am proud to serve as the Co-Convenor of this Commission, together with Nobel Peace Laureate Muhammad Yunus. We are under no illusion about the magnitude of the task. But we are encouraged that the 2030 Agenda has created such a strong impetus to finally eliminate slavery. We stand ready to take this opportunity, together with all of you.

Thank you.