



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

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**NEW YORK, 26 JULY 2011  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON YOUTH  
STATEMENT BY MS. ALESSANDRA GREGG, ADVISER**

Mr. President, Ministers, Excellencies, Youth Representatives,

It is a great honor, and indeed a very special moment for me, to be able to speak to you as a youth representative of Liechtenstein. I extend my country's deepest sympathies to those suffering from the horrific loss of life in Norway. Let this meeting result in a renewed commitment to strive day to day, in solidarity, against expressions of hate.

I have had the luck of growing up in a free and prosperous part of the world. But already as a small kid, seeing images of war, famine and environmental catastrophes, I realized quickly that most children and youth in the world were less lucky. Over the years, these images helped me develop a sense of responsibility, and understanding of interconnectedness that led to transformative action, first within my own home, at school, and now as I strive towards my ideals day to day. I believe young people have an innate sense of justice. And with the right kind of education, we develop a desire to act on it. Our sense of responsibility and energy to act is the world's greatest untapped asset. I hope this meeting will help us all make better use of it.

Mr. President,

Participation, as prerequisite for achieving mutual dialogue and understanding, is not just an option, but a demand expressed by youth. In Norway, the young survivors of the massacre pledged to stay engaged in order to demonstrate that violence against opinion is ineffective.

Such bravery and commitment against all odds is a testament to the ideals we strive for. Arab youths have also reminded the world of the incredible power of peaceful protest. This should be a sobering thought for leaders who continue to deny youth their inalienable human rights and an opportunity to pursue their dreams and ambitions. Not only do we increasingly possess a global consciousness, but we have the dexterity and ingenuity, the courage, and the sense of urgency, to use tools for mass mobilization to spread our voices. Once a person has had a taste of the freedom of expression, there's no going back. A free and open internet is essential for providing suppressed populations a taste of this right.

The youths of Tunisia, who within six months have brought about jaw-dropping changes, serve as an inspiration and guidance to their peers in many other countries. The litmus test of real transformation will be the level of participation of women and youth in leadership positions and decision-making processes.

We must apply the lessons learned from revolutions in the Arab region to other situations of injustice as well. Why not organize weekly youth demonstrations for other pressing issues or turn our fight against climate change into a global news event? Learning about our human rights gives us the clarity and focus to act. This is why human rights education and learning is so important. Human rights education allows us to view our own rights and our community's rights in dialogue with others, locally, regionally, and globally, resulting in a common language of humanity. The exhilarating solidarity we feel with the youth activists in the Arab world is based on a renewed understanding of the universality of human rights, and has turned years of limited mutual understanding on its head. A society of peace, where youths are able to contribute to and taste the fruits of culture, starts with a basic human rights education.

Mr. President,

As the global population hits 7 billion, with a 50% increase in the number of women of reproductive age since 1990, it is not only a human right but also a demographic imperative to deliver sexual and reproductive health education and family planning. It is unacceptable that a 15 year old-girl living in South Sudan has a higher chance of dying in childbirth than completing school. It must also be recognized that the human rights the young Arab protestors rose up to

claim are indivisible and include sexual and reproductive rights. Young women and men must not let their bodies be subjugated by those in power. And as has been demonstrated by an increasingly large body of statistics, well-informed reproductive decisions can have profound positive effects on the sustainable development of a country.

Mr. President,

Armed conflicts are a main source of violations of the rights of children and youth. Using them as instruments of war is among the most heinous violations of the laws of armed conflict. Liechtenstein reiterates its full support to the work for the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict. We also believe fighting impunity is a prerequisite for the establishment of long-term peace, whereby children and youths are not condemned to partake in vicious cycles of violence. The International Criminal Court plays an important role in this regard, as demonstrated by its first trial ever - of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, charged with forcibly recruiting boys and girls to fight with his militia. Liechtenstein further deplores reoccurring attacks on schools and hospitals and threats against students and teachers. We commend the Security Council for taking concrete action on this important issue through the adoption of resolution 1998.

On May 25th 2010, the United Nations launched a two year campaign to achieve universal ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) by 2012. The Optional Protocol increases the age for direct participation in hostilities to the age of 18. To support the campaign for universal ratification of the Optional Protocol and to raise awareness about the plight of children affected by armed conflict, Liechtenstein has teamed up with a record label to produce a CD called "Right to Play."<sup>1</sup> The proceeds from the sale go to Play31, an NGO that organizes football games among former child soldiers to assist in the process of reconciliation. Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates the right to play. Children affected by armed conflicts around the world are being deprived of this right. Let's give it back to them before it is too late. Thank You.

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<sup>1</sup> You can get a copy of the CD "Right to Play" on iTunes, at Cduniverse.com, Amazon.com, perm-vac.com, or hmv.com.