



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

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AGENDA ITEM 67: REPORT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

STATEMENT BY CHRISTIAN WENAWESER, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President,

We thank the President of the Human Rights Council for presenting a comprehensive and informative account of the Council's work. As the central permanent human rights body of the United Nations, the Human Rights Council has proven that even in times of crisis it is a well-established voice and an authority on the entire spectrum of human rights questions, not only for this Assembly, but also for the broader public. It has shown its responsiveness throughout these difficult times to the significant fall-out of the COVID-19 pandemic on the promotion and protection of human rights. Under the wise guidance of the Austrian Presidency, it was possible to find a way to quickly respond to acute human rights challenges and to ensure the continued functioning of the Council. We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to Ambassador Tichy-Fisslberger for her determination and leadership.

The holding of two urgent debates in 2020 on systemic racism and police brutality, and on the human rights situation in Belarus, proved that the Human Rights Council continues to be in a position to address human rights situations of concern in a timely and effective manner, despite

the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Liechtenstein strongly supports the work of the Council, its evolving body of Special Procedures and its strong civil society dimension as well as the Universal Periodic Review, whose integrity and universality are important achievements that must be preserved. These mechanisms are all the more relevant in times when human rights are under attack. The COVID-19 pandemic in particular has exposed and exacerbated profound inequalities and injustices around the globe. And it has further contributed to human rights protection gaps. Liechtenstein is deeply concerned about measures to counter the pandemic that undermine human rights and fundamental freedoms, including core civil and political rights, the rights to health, privacy and education, and gender equality. We deplore responses to the pandemic that have further fueled and highlighted existing discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

The current COVID-19 pandemic, the wider inequality gap and the resulting economic impact further increase vulnerability to human trafficking and modern slavery. With the transition to more online activities as a response to the pandemic, traffickers are increasingly using online technology to recruit and exploit victims, which makes the crime – and the fight against it – even more complex. Liechtenstein has contributed to this fight with a public-private partnership initiative “Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking” (FAST) and its blueprint for financial actors to help eradicate slavery, such as through the promotion of sustainable and innovative financing, responsible lending and investment, as well as compliance and regulation. The Human Rights Council – in addition to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the ECOSOC – can play an important role in disseminating the blueprint. We are grateful for the support by the Special Rapporteurs on contemporary forms of slavery and on trafficking in persons in this regard.

Mr. President,

While this debate is an important annual opportunity for the General Assembly to engage with

the Human Rights Council on its substantive work, it also provides a good platform to evaluate the Council's institutional role in the framework of the United Nations. The last review of the Human Rights Council has brought useful clarification to the Council's relationship with the General Assembly, including its Third and Fifth Committees. But the General Assembly has a standing responsibility to provide conditions conducive for the Council to implement its mandate. We are concerned about the severe and on-going liquidity crisis of the United Nations that also negatively affects the work of the OHCHR and the Human Rights Council and that has led to the situation that not all mandated activities of the year could have been carried out. While we welcome the pragmatic solution the Human Rights Council has found by postponing the concerned activities into the next year, we are of the strong opinion that this should be an exceptional case. In this regard, we call upon all States to fully comply in a timely manner with financial obligations towards the United Nations and call for more resources to be allocated to the human rights pillar.

Mr. President,

The work of the Human Rights Council is essential in particular in cases of human rights emergencies and grave violations, and the Council is indeed often the only UN body to address such situations with the necessary urgency. In this regard we welcome the adoption of a follow-up resolution on the role of the Human Rights Council on the prevention of human rights violations in its 45th session. The measures decided upon provide a valuable opportunity to further strengthen the Council's role with regard to the prevention of human rights violations. We welcome in particular efforts to apply the Responsibility to Protect principle in the framework of the Council's work.

We continue to be concerned about grave human rights violations, including in Myanmar and the Syrian Arab Republic, as documented in the Council's Special Procedures and accountability mechanisms. Liechtenstein welcomes the Council's support of accountability efforts, including

the important steps taken by the International Criminal Court in the context of forced deportation and the ICJ under the Genocide convention, in its resolution 43/26. At the same time, we regret that the Security Council continues to ignore calls from States, the UN system and the victims themselves for a referral to the ICC.

There is no doubt that there is room for improvement regarding the HRC's mandate to promote the effective coordination and the mainstreaming of human rights within the United Nations system. This calls for stronger and more consistent links between Geneva and New York, also in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and for a more robust cooperation between the Human Rights Council and other main bodies of the UN, in particular the Security Council. The work of the Human Rights Council and many of its Special Procedure mandate holders is, in many instances, relevant to the discussions in the Security Council, yet consistently disregarded by the latter. We call upon the Security Council to take up the offer by the HRC to engage more on substantive matters, to use the best available factual basis for decision-making and not to limit its work to an extensively narrow concept of security.

Mr. President,

The General Assembly has recently elected new members to the Human Rights Council. Resolution 60/251 states clearly that Council members shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, including through full cooperation with the UN human rights system. We are grateful for the continued engagement by civil society actors in assessing the quality of candidates and encourage all candidates to participating in hearings and exchanges organized by civil society. We will continue to support additional measures to ensure the full implementation of the relevant provisions of resolution 60/251, including as part of discussions on the Council's status.

I thank you.