



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

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AGENDA ITEM 121

REVITALIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATEMENT BY GEORG SPARBER, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President

The General Assembly meets today to discuss its revitalization against difficult odds. Geopolitical tensions and the rise of nationalism have an eroding effect on the international rules-based order and on inclusive multilateralism, of which the General Assembly is the most important incarnation. Within the General Assembly, we are witnessing an unfortunate tendency to backtrack on longstanding agreements, a decline in resolutions adopted by consensus and an increase in procedural difficulties. At the same time, the expectations of our Governments and the broader public in the General Assembly are high. We are called upon to provide leadership on global topics, including sustainable development, climate change, human rights and peace and security. And there is an expectation that we take on emerging challenges associated with artificial intelligence, cyber-security and new forms of weapons, to name but a few. Consequently, the workload of the Assembly continues to grow. The proliferation of high-level meetings is just one, albeit a very visible aspect of that development. The main Committees are also seeing an increase in their work, without making efficiency gains. Efforts to streamline processes and economize on the use of our resources routinely fall victim to ideological turf battles. From the perspective of a small State, which is the majority perspective in this hall, it is increasingly challenging to secure full and meaningful participation in the General Assembly proceedings. Some of the most basic tools that have been developed to assist States, in particular the United Nations journal, have evolved in a way that provides close to zero added value despite clear expectations and normative guidance from the membership.

Mr. President

These general developments would be challenging in normal times, but today the membership faces a number of additional problems that represent a systemic risk to the organization. This year we have witnessed significant delays in proceedings of the main Committees and a sharp decline in secretariat services due to a lack of funds. Both issues are legitimate concerns for the General Assembly as they directly affect its work and functioning. The Ad-hoc Working Group on revitalization should therefore proactively look into these issues. Liechtenstein has made its position clear in the relevant main Committees that it supports the most efficient use of resources and thus opposes attempts to stall the Committees' work on procedural grounds. At the same time, obligations under international agreements that facilitate the meaningful participation of all delegations in the proceedings of the United Nations, including the headquarters agreement, must be fully implemented. Alleged violations of such agreements cannot be considered a bilateral matter, nor can the proper determination of such allegations be left to the sole responsibility of the States involved. While the host country committee is the dedicated subsidiary body of the General Assembly to deal with such matters, its capacity to solve disputes should be the measure for the committee's ability to implement its mandate, and both the scale and seriousness of allegations may justify deliberation by the membership as a whole. With respect to the lack of funding and the so-called liquidity crisis, there should be no question that the full and timely payment of contributions to the United Nations budget is an essential element of membership in the General Assembly. Financial obligations are legal obligations and it is unacceptable that only 34 Member States have honored these obligations in 2019. While the sovereign equality of States imposes a shared responsibility for the proper resourcing of the organization on all members, it is evident that large contributors have a particular responsibility insofar as their lack of compliance directly affects the proper work and functioning of the organization, with negative consequences for the entire membership. Liechtenstein supports the Secretary-General in finding measures intended to increase his room for maneuver in time of financial crisis and would expect the same from all members, in particular from those responsible for the financial strain of the organization.

Mr. President,

The key measure to place the General Assembly at the center of the work of the UN is to enable it to play its role and authority as the central and universal decision-making body. The Charter makes it clear that this role and authority includes matters of peace and security. By acting in situations where the Security Council is unable to act, the Assembly reinforces the complementary nature of Charter bodies, as it has done with the creation of the IIM for Syria in light of the endemic use of the veto in the Security Council, which has only increased further in the recent past. Liechtenstein is of the view that the General Assembly should debate any use of the veto in a formal meeting, as a measure of accountability as well as a means to empower this Assembly. Such a debate should take place without prejudice to any possible outcome and

independently of the substance of the resolution that was subject to a veto. The Security Council should be invited to contribute to the discussion in the General Assembly with a special report in accordance with article 24.3 of the Charter. Liechtenstein intends to work with all interested delegations to create the mandate for such a debate in the coming weeks.

Mr. President,

As part of the ACT-Group Liechtenstein will continue to advocate for a number of concrete measures to strengthen the role of the General Assembly and increase accountability of the Security Council. The procedural improvements in the selection of the Secretary-General represent a minimum standard for the future, to be applied and further enhanced, including in cases in which an incumbent Secretary-General applies for a second term. In the broader context of senior leadership appointments at the United Nations, Liechtenstein also recalls the proposal to adopt the practice of single, non-renewable terms aimed at increasing the independence of elected officials. Liechtenstein will also further pursue the promotion of the ACT-Code of Conduct as a minimum standard for candidates to the Security Council and to invoke the Code in relevant situations. Given the broad and growing support in the membership for the Code of Conduct, currently standing at 121 States, we consider a strong and proactive role of the General Assembly whenever the Security Council fails to protect civilians from mass atrocities a natural extension to the Code.

I thank you.