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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SECURITY COUNCIL - OPEN DEBATE

**THREATS TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY: SEA-LEVEL RISE – IMPLICATIONS FOR
INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY**

STATEMENT BY MYRIAM OEHRI, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, CHARGÉE D'AFFAIRES A.I.

Mr. President,

Thank you for bringing this important topic to our attention as an official meeting of the Security Council for the first time. It is long past time for the Council to take on a human security perspective that encompasses all possible threats to international peace and security. The far-reaching consequences of sea-level rise demonstrate as clearly as any phenomenon that climate change is in itself a security threat worthy of the Council's systematic attention. When we last addressed Council members on the topic of sea-level rise, at an Arria-Formula meeting of October 2021, a standalone Security Council resolution on climate and security was being negotiated. Despite the overwhelming support of the UN membership of said resolution, it was blocked by the use of the veto. As a result of the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 76/262 last year, the General Assembly now has another tool to hold the veto-wielding member accountable and make its position clear on this most important of issues.

Especially for those peoples living in low-lying atoll States, considering when and how they may need to move their lives and possessions, from where they will be able to get fresh water, or what their citizenship will be worth in a generation's time, sea-level rise is the most pressing security issue. As with all questions of peace and security, women and girls will undoubtedly shoulder a disproportionate burden. At the same time, they will remain crucial agents of change.

A gender-sensitive lens is thus urgently needed in all climate and security responses.

Mr. President,

As we all know, Member States are far off track to avert the worst consequences of climate change. There is “no credible pathway to 1.5C in place”, according to UNEP. Only drastic reductions to global emissions will spare populations the most serious consequences of sea-level rise. This is true for atoll nations whose groundwater is at risk of saltwater intrusion, and whose territory is at risk of inundation. It is also true for volcanic island nations whose populations predominantly live close to sea-level, and are in addition often at greater risk of natural disasters such as hurricanes. Therefore, the international community must also ensure that particularly affected States and countries have the legal certainty to make decisions on behalf of their populations. Liechtenstein appreciates today’s presence of Dr. Bogdan Aurescu, Co-Chair of the International Law Commission’s Study Group on Sea Level Rise, and continues to support ongoing efforts at the ILC to clarify aspects of international law relevant to sea-level rise, in relation to the law of the sea, the protection of persons affected by sea-level rise, and statehood.

Mr. President,

In closing I wish to focus in particular on questions of statehood raised by sea-level rise. We have heard today references to sea-level rise’s ‘existential threat’ for certain States. Part of the role the international community can provide for those most affected is to recommit ourselves to the right to self-determination of peoples set forth in Common Article 1 of the twin Human Rights Covenants. In situations of sea-level rise, where territory is inundated and individuals are forced to relocate, this should not in itself imply challenges to State persistence – something which Liechtenstein has emphasized in our submissions to the ILC process and for which we see strong support in international law. The novel situation of full or partial inundation of the territory of a State or country, or the relocation of its people, should not change the presumption in international law more generally that only the relevant people should be able to determine the mode of expression of their right to self-determination, including through Statehood.

I thank you.