



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

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AGENDA ITEM 34 – PREVENTION OF ARMED CONFLICT

**REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL, IMPARTIAL AND INDEPENDENT MECHANISM TO ASSIST IN THE
INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MOST SERIOUS CRIMES
UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW COMMITTED IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC SINCE MARCH 2011**

STATEMENT BY MS. MYRIAM OEHRI, CHARGÉE D'AFFAIRES A.I., PERMANENT MISSION OF THE
PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President,

The Syrian war began 11 years ago. 11 years of conflict in which hundreds of thousands of people have been killed, millions have fled their homes, and many have gone missing. A tragic state of affairs, which in large part has to do with impunity. When impunity reigns, conflicts descend into a downward spiral as perpetrators feel emboldened and systematic disregard for international humanitarian law becomes a method of warfare. We meet here today in a General Assembly that has been busy in recent weeks responding to the start of a new conflict far from Syria's shores, but with a close connection to it: the brazen aggression against Ukraine, where we are witnessing a chilling repetition of the Russian playbook written in Syria.

Mr. President,

This underlines even more strongly the need to ensure accountability for the crimes committed in the Syrian conflict. We welcome the important role that the General Assembly has played in

this respect. In December 2016, Liechtenstein had the honor to introduce the draft resolution that would later become resolution 71/248 creating the IIIM, a common effort to ensure accountability for the most serious crimes under international law. Its creation was driven in equal parts by the horror at the atrocities committed in Syria, our collective shame and frustration over the inaction by the Security Council, and our firm belief that accountability was not only necessary, but also possible.

We commend the important work the IIIM has done so far, and thank Ms. Catherine Marchi-Uhel for her strong leadership as the Head of the IIIM since its creation. The IIIM, as we have just heard from Ms. Marchi-Uhel, continues to demonstrate the value it adds to justice efforts concerning the most serious crimes committed in Syria. In response to requests for assistance, the IIIM aided 91 distinct investigations conducted at the national level, some of which concerned cases in which a suspect was in detention, or led to trial proceedings. We are encouraged to see that this novel accountability mechanism, created by this Assembly, is working. The IIIM has firmly established itself as a successful model for accountability work, replicated by the creation of a nearly identical Mechanism established by the Human Rights Council for the situation in Myanmar. The IIIM's success and political acceptance have further been expressed through this Assembly's decision to secure its funding through the regular UN budget. And, we fully expect it to receive sustainable funding from the regular budget moving forward. Indeed, the mandate of the IIIM and the manner in which it has been doing its work have been so persuasive that calls to establish a generic entity with an identical mandate are growing louder. We look forward to participating in these reflections.

Despite these successes, the IIIM is only a partial answer to the accountability challenge we face in Syria. The IIIM is not a court. Important accountability gaps therefore must be filled, and we thank the States that have stepped up to undertake criminal proceedings in their national courts on the basis of the principle of universal jurisdiction. We very much hope that these proceedings – including the successful conclusion of recent cases in Koblenz, Germany – are only the beginning. And, we continue to call on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, an effort that has been blocked in the past by the veto of two permanent members despite the wish of the overwhelming majority of the UN membership.

Mr. President,

The creation of the IIIM is undeniably an expression of the important role this Assembly can play with respect to accountability. We are seeing investigations and prosecutions in a variety of national Courts. States are sharing information with the IIIM. Things are moving in the right direction and accountability for the crimes committed in Syria is within reach. We hope to see this type of action replicated in other challenging situations in which the Council is deadlocked. Most importantly, discussions on accountability must be part and parcel of our overall conversation on Syria: Syrian civil society in particular have made it clear time and again that there can be no stable and peaceful future for the country without accountability for the past atrocities. We have an obligation to turn this call into practice, in line with our often-stated belief that there can be no sustainable peace in Syria without justice.

I thank you.