



STÄNDIGE MISSION
DES FÜRSTENTUMS LIECHTENSTEIN

MISSION PERMANENTE
DE LA PRINCIPAUTÉ DE LIECHTENSTEIN

PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN

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High-Level Segment

Statement by H.E. Aurelia Frick
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Mr. President,

In its second decade, the Human Rights Council remains one of the international community's most important instruments in promoting universal respect for the protection of human rights. Unfortunately, the Council's work has become more and more polarized in recent years. The opposition to certain country-specific and thematic issues has become a matter of politics. Meanwhile, the actual human rights consequences for the affected are marginalized. This is a trend that has to be counteracted.

Mr. President

The active participation and contribution of national human rights institutions and civil society is at the heart of the work of the Council and its mechanisms. A growing number of human rights defenders around the world are confronting intimidation, threats and reprisals. Their work is often hampered by obstacles such as restrictive legislation or administrative regulations. These actions not only violate universally recognised human rights standards. They also seriously impact efforts by the civil society to promote and protect human rights. In the end, they put at risk the mission of the Council itself.

Very disturbingly, reprisals against persons who cooperate with UN human rights representatives and mechanisms persist. They have even become more severe over time. This is unacceptable. We commend the recent efforts led by Assistant Secretary General Andrew Gilmour to help tackle these reprisals. But this is not enough. A united and robust response from all of us is needed to protect civil society space.

Mr. President,

As the international community looks towards the third Universal Periodic Review cycle (UPR), it is time to reflect on both its achievements and its shortcomings. In this regard, it is paramount that the third cycle increases the participation of civil society. But, we must also think of ways how to further strengthen the role of the UPR. In my view, we should focus on how it can best contribute to the implementation of the UPR recommendations, as well as our commitments made in the 2030 Agenda.

For Liechtenstein, the UPR has proved itself as a powerful tool. It stimulated internal debate and triggered change. Let me share with you an example: It was recommended to Liechtenstein to set up a National Human Rights Institution according to the Paris Principles (NHRI). The Government accepted this UPR recommendation and mandated a working group to evaluate the necessary legislative amendments. After a broad consultation process with civil society and other stakeholders, the Liechtenstein Parliament decided in November last year by consensus on the new law establishing such a National Human Rights Institution. Finally the new “Association for Human Rights in Liechtenstein” has been founded in December of last year. I hope that our Institution will play a key role in contributing to the respect for and the protection of human rights in my country.

Mr. President,

The creation of the Human Rights Council was based on the understanding, that those who serve as its members on it commit themselves to cooperation and to the promotion and protection of human rights. The Council has created several new mandates for special procedures and renewed many others. The work of the special procedures supports us in mov-

ing towards the achievement of commitments we all have made – in the UN Charter, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in conventions and recently in adopting 2030 Agenda.

We commend the Council on the recent creation of a mandate for an independent expert on the protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We congratulate Mr. Muntarbhorn on his appointment as independent expert and urge all Member States to cooperate fully with him. Individuals in all regions of the world are subject to acts of violence and discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We should discuss these simple facts and refrain from ideological debates on this issue.

Mr. President,

Addressing critical situations of human rights violations are an essential part of the Council's mandate to promote the protection of human rights. In this regard, the Human Rights Council has been seized with the situation in Syria for several years now. The Commission of Inquiry has been supplying ample evidence and documentation of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the conflict parties. This has therefore led to strong calls for accountability - from within the UN system and among States. But there has been no action to pursue this goal. A referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court has been vetoed in the Security Council in 2014. Since then, the Security Council has done nothing to ensure accountability.

This is one of the reasons why Liechtenstein initiated General Assembly resolution 71/248. The resolutions established 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”. The creation of the Mechanism shows that the General Assembly can, and should, take meaningful action to address ongoing crises in line with its functions and powers. This is in line with Article 10 and Article 11 of the Charter of the United Nations. It is an important reminder that we all need to work towards fighting impunity, especially when the Security Council fails to act. The Mechanism is complementary to the Commission of Inquiry: the Commission focuses on broad patterns of the worst crimes under international law, reports to the HRC and does advocacy work. The Mechanism on the other hand primarily builds on the information collected by others, in particular the Commission, but also civil society organizations.

The Mechanism collects, consolidates, preserves and analyses evidence and prepares case files to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings. Such trials can take place in national, regional or international courts or tribunals. Since the Mechanism will initially be funded exclusively from voluntary contributions, I appeal to you to commit to it with financial support.

To date, for example, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Qatar, Hungary, Switzerland, Australia and my own country Liechtenstein have made contributions to support the establishment of the Mechanism. And many others are in the process of considering such a contribution. I

hope I can count on your support to ensure that we can turn the promise given, when adopting this resolution, into meaningful action.

To conclude, Mr. President, let me come back to the beginning of my statement: Our work at the Council must be guided by the ultimate goal this Council has been established for: to hear the victims of human rights violations and abuses of all around the world and to make this world a better place. It is the duty of everyone in this hall to live up to this expectation.