



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

“FRAMING THE USE OF THE VETO IN THE FACE OF MASSIVE CRIMES”

HIGH-LEVEL MINISTERIAL EVENT

STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. AURELIA FRICK

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN

Co-Chairs,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Liechtenstein is a member of the ACT Group, which advocates for the improvement of the Security Council’s working methods. Within this group, we coordinate the work of those who take a special interest in the question of the use of the veto. I have the honor to speak today on behalf of Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Switzerland as well as my own country.

As Member States of the United Nations, we have all charged the Security Council with the primary responsibility for international peace and security. In so doing, we granted the permanent members of the Council a special privilege: for any resolution to be adopted, the concurring vote of all five permanent members is needed. In exchange for this privilege, we must and do expect

the permanent members to act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter. The status as permanent member is a privileged position, and it therefore comes with a special responsibility to uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter.

Unfortunately, there are numerous examples, some from the recent past, of vetoes that are in our view incompatible with this special responsibility. A series of vetoes, or threats to veto, has prevented the Security Council from taking action to end incidents of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Effective international response has thus been blocked in Syria, Rwanda and Bosnia and Herzegovina, to name but a few examples. We do not see how vetoes that block Council action aimed at preventing or ending the commission of the most serious crimes under international law are compatible with the permanent members' special responsibility to uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter.

We were therefore pleased that France has taken up an idea which many of us have advocated for years: that the permanent members of the Security Council voluntarily commit to refraining from using the veto to block Council action aimed at preventing or ending atrocity crimes. It is important to be clear on the goal of this proposal: it neither seeks to rewrite the Charter, nor does it call for the abolition of the veto. It merely asks the permanent members of the Security Council to commit to a **responsible** use of the veto – to refrain from its use in certain, clearly defined circumstances involving the most serious crimes under international law.

Co-Chairs,

We have continually spoken out in favor of proposals to this end, together with many others. We believe that the many expressions of good will should now be translated into a concrete product. Let me therefore offer some comments on the substance of a possible code of conduct. It must meet certain standards of quality:

- The content of any code of conduct must be **meaningful**. We would like to see a document that is clear and free of caveats that would make it irrelevant in practice. This is even more important since the end product is to be a political, and not a legal commitment.
- We are looking for a code of conduct that contains a **strong commitment to timely action** to prevent or end the crimes in question. Given the irreversible consequences of the crimes involved, it is crucial that **prevention** be included.
- The code should refer to an **authoritative and respected entity** which can bring ongoing or imminent instances of such crimes to the attention of the Council. The Secretary-General is of course ideally suited to play this role, given his competence under Article 99 of the United Nations Charter, and given his access to the early-warning capabilities of the UN system. But there are other options, including by entities who could act on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Allow me conclude with a few remarks on the way forward:

- We cannot afford to wait. The crisis in Syria and the inability of the Council to respond to it are just one painful illustration of the fact that time is of the essence. We believe that a serious and constructive effort can result in a solid product by the end of the year. We

highly value France's leadership and hope that the other permanent members will join this effort as soon as possible.

- While the permanent members' veto power certainly entails a special responsibility, *all* members of the Security Council have a responsibility to prevent or end the commission of atrocity crimes. We therefore favor a broader discussion, including also the wider UN membership. This could perhaps result in an agreement that is open to be embraced by other Council members as well. We could also envisage States aspiring to seats on the Council committing themselves to these standards as part of their campaign.
- Together with other members of the ACT Group, we are interested in continuing our engagement to move this process forward and to contribute to a quality outcome. We will be happy to share our own ideas in the near future and hope that they will contribute to an early agreement.

Co-Chairs,

There is a quickly growing sense of frustration among the membership with the Security Council's inability to carry out its responsibility to maintain international peace and security. A meaningful pledge to refrain from blocking Security Council action aimed at preventing or ending the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes would help turn the page. A genuine, timely effort to achieve agreement on such a code of conduct among the largest possible group of permanent members would certainly find the support of a broad cross-section of members of the United Nations. Our delegations stand ready to assist you in this endeavor.

I thank you.