



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

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AGENDA ITEM 60 – USE OF THE VETO

DEBATE - VETO INITIATIVE – “THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST”

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President,

For the third time since the adoption of the Veto Initiative in April last year, this Assembly is convened in regular session as a result of a veto cast in the Security Council, on 11 July. This was the 18th veto cast by the Russian Federation to block Council action on Syria in the last 12 years. The vetoed draft resolution put forward by co-penholders Brazil and Switzerland would have extended the mandate for cross-border aid through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing for 9 months, in line with a needs assessment reflected in the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. This assessment outlined that most United Nations humanitarian assistance, of essential importance for millions of people in the north-west of the country, is routed through the Bab al-Hawa crossing. The vetoed draft resolution enjoyed strong support in the Council, with 13 members casting their vote in favor. We thank the penholders for their tireless efforts, for generating strong support for

the resolution and for ensuring cohesion among the elected members of the Council. No Security Council product on this topic has been adopted since.

It is of essential importance for this Assembly to discuss the relevant legal arguments and political implications of this veto. This is due both to the institutional relationship between these two main UN organs and the fact that this Assembly has established the principles and modalities for humanitarian assistance. We thank the President of the General Assembly for the prompt scheduling of today's debate.

Mr. President,

The veto cast last week mirrors the one cast by the same State almost exactly 12 months ago. But the circumstances have changed in two vital aspects. Firstly, the earthquakes and aftershocks that hit southern Türkiye and northern Syria on 6 February affected almost 9 million people in Syria, and resulted in the opening of two additional border crossings. Secondly, following the veto the government of the Syrian Arab Republic indicated its consent to the reopening of the Bab al-Hawa crossing to the UN and its specialized agencies, while putting forward conditions for its cooperation that the United Nations has called unacceptable as they are incompatible with relevant provisions of international law.

Mr. President,

Granting humanitarian access is a legal obligation. It should not have taken 9 years

and an earthquake to give consent to the delivery of cross-border aid to the suffering population. Discussions in the Security Council, the information reflected in reports of the Secretary-General and elsewhere have not at any point produced a valid reason for withholding such consent. This Assembly has reflected on the arbitrary denial of humanitarian access in Syria – and more recently, strongly condemned the intentional denial of humanitarian assistance – in its annual resolutions on the situation of human rights in Syria. We also recall that the intentional starvation of civilians is a prosecutable crime under international criminal law.

Mr. President,

We support the ongoing efforts by OCHA to find modalities for the delivery of humanitarian aid through Bab al-Hawa that are fully consistent with international law and with humanitarian principles, in line with General Assembly resolution 46/182. The United Nations and implementing partners must be able to engage with relevant state and non-state parties as operationally necessary to carry out safe and unimpeded humanitarian operations, in particular.

Mr. President,

As we meet today, Security Council action to ensure predictable and reliable cross-border aid to Syria seems blocked, evidently for the foreseeable future. In this context, we note again that that humanitarian access in the situation under discussion is governed by international humanitarian law. Given its central role in

creating the humanitarian architecture reflected in particular in GA resolution 46/182, this Assembly has a natural role in considering its delivery in particular situations.

As we await of the outcome of the ongoing discussions between OCHA and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, this Assembly, in line with its powers and functions under the Charter should reflect on possible action with the aim of ensuring the flow of aid, on the basis of regular reporting from the Secretary-General.

I thank you.