



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

NEW YORK, 23 OCTOBER 2015

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

LECTURE SERIES ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: “AFTER THE HIGH-LEVEL REVIEW – CONNECTING LOCAL AND GLOBAL ACTION TO IMPLEMENT THE WPS AGENDA”

STATEMENT BY H.E. MS. AURELIA FRICK

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Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very happy to be back in New York. Women’s human rights and empowerment are issues especially close to my heart. It therefore means a lot to me to be able to be present at this **final edition of our Women, Peace and Security lecture series.**

Over the past years, this project has seen fantastic and powerful speakers such as:

- ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda;
- High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay;
- or SRSG to South Sudan Hilde Johnson, to name just a few.

We were also particularly keen to give a platform to **civil society activists** from the field – such as women human rights defenders from Syria, Ukraine, Nigeria and the Korean Peninsula.

We have covered a very broad range of issues. It took us almost three years to complete the series. This shows the **complexity, comprehensive nature and relevance** of the WPS agenda.

Today I would like to **offer a very frank assessment** of where we are – and more importantly of the road ahead. I would like to **reflect on lessons** learned together, but also **discuss how to best use this great opportunity** provided by the high-level review and the Global Study.

The implementation gap is enormous. It has been said many times, but there is no way around repeating it. What we have achieved on paper – in Resolution 1325 and the follow-up resolutions – is impressive. But the impact on the ground remains disappointing. Institutional changes alone will not make the difference. But appointing an **Assistant Secretary-General for WPS** – as suggested by the Global Study – could galvanize implementation.

So what can we do to improve implementation? Five key points come to mind:

First, we cannot rely on the Security Council alone.

We must involve **other stakeholders** and use other processes. **Gender-based discrimination, political exclusion and violence against women** are problems in every society, in every country. These problems are exacerbated in conflict situations – making women even more vulnerable, and excluding them from peace processes.

But we have created new opportunities, especially through the **2030 Agenda. SDG 5 on gender equality** is a big achievement. And **goal 16 on peaceful societies** offers an excellent platform to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Another big opportunity is the **World Humanitarian Summit** next year. Women's full and equal participation should be at the very center of the Summit's outcome. We know that this will enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian aid, and enhance the sustainability of peace.

Second, personal leadership is key.

The WPS agenda needs **real champions** – among States, in the field, in the Secretariat. ICC Prosecutor **Fatou Bensouda** was the first speaker at our series. She has been a fantastic advocate and has made the fight against sexual violence her priority.

Another good example was **Hilde Johnson**. As the new Special Representative for South Sudan, she requested the highest number of gender advisors ever in any mission – with success. This shows that we should not too easily accept that there are not enough funds for women, peace and security.

And the **Secretary-General** himself has been a leader in placing women in leadership positions. He has been a true “he for she”. And I have high hopes that his successor will be a **she for she**.

Third, we must connect the UN with the actors in the field.

Julienne Lusenge, a women’s rights activist from the DRC, said that policy-makers at the UN were utterly detached from what is happening on the ground. Through our series, we have tried to change that, at least to some extent. Women in conflict know best what they need. They are the ones making the difference. We need to empower local women’s organizations and listen to their voices. Let’s do this in particular as we get ready for the World Humanitarian Summit.

Fourth, we must end impunity.

Armed conflicts bring out the worst in humans. And they lead to the most horrendous crimes. Women are increasingly targeted in armed conflict, in particular as victims of gender-based violence. Such crimes simply cannot go unpunished. Survivors often face **stigmatization** and threats, which prevents them from reporting crimes. The **lack of accountability** is all too easily seen as silent acceptance of the culture of impunity around gender-based and sexual violence. We need to do more to support transitional and ad-hoc justice mechanisms, and in particular lend greater support – and reparations! – to survivors. Perpetrators must no longer have reason to expect silence. They must expect accountability.

Fifth, and final point: prevention is key.

Just compare the **global military spending** to the UN's funding for **conflict prevention**. There is no greater proof of how massively off-balance our priorities are. Yet we all know that investing our money in prevention is the smart thing to do. Some of our national key projects have to do with conflict prevention: For example, we are promoting the Kampala amendments on the crime of aggression. They will help enforce the prohibition of the illegal use of force – and thus help prevent armed conflict. And just earlier today, we launched the Code of Conduct that will strengthen Security Council action to end or prevent atrocity crimes – supported by [104] countries. These are important investments in prevention, hopefully with long-term results.

In conclusion, let me emphasize what a pleasure and privilege it has been to run this series together with our partners. By partners I mean PeaceWomen and the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination, but also all of you. Promoting the WPS agenda is an enormous challenge, but also very rewarding: There is nothing that is more worth fighting for.

So thank you for your support in the past, and thank you for continuing this important effort in the future.