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**SECURITY COUNCIL – OPEN DEBATE – “WOMEN BUILDING PEACE IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT”
STATEMENT BY H.E. DOMINIQUE HASLER, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF
LIECHTENSTEIN**

Madam President,

I congratulate Switzerland on its second Security Council presidency, and am happy to see that this debate is presided over by a woman Head of State.

In many parts of the world, 2023 was a devastating year for women and girls. The number of women killed in armed conflicts doubled compared to the previous year. Conflict-related sexual violence increased significantly. So did the number of girls affected by grave violations. I am particularly concerned about the escalation in the Middle East. It has had devastating impacts on civilians, many of whom are women and children. The conflicts in Ukraine, Sudan and Myanmar, among others, have put a particular burden on women as well. The overall trend of more governments and non-state actors resorting to military action and use of force must be changed urgently - by choosing diplomacy, mediation, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Madam President,

I appreciate that today's debate focuses on the participation pillar of the WPS agenda. Women's diverse perspectives, for example, peacebuilders' awareness of indicators pointing to increased tension within their communities, help *prevent* the outbreak of violence or conflict. Evidence is clear that women's participation in conflict *resolution* – as negotiators and mediators – leads to better and more sustainable results. Yet, all too often, women are not fully and equally included in mediation and peacebuilding processes – at times they are even excluded altogether, due to a lack of political will and sometimes ignorance. Fulfilling our shared commitments under the WPS agenda and the Pact for the Future requires investing more in women's participation in mediation, including through local peacebuilders and the mainstreaming of gender expertise in all stages of peace processes. Women's voices everywhere are essential for a sustained positive peace that goes well beyond the silencing of guns.

Madam President,

Under the Taliban rule for three years now, we have witnessed one of the most severe situations of persecution of women and girls worldwide. Afghan women and girls are now even prohibited from speaking in public. We must therefore use our voices to speak up on their behalf. The United Nations, and this Council in particular, has a special responsibility. The full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of Afghan women in the process leading to a country at peace, as mandated by Security Council resolution 2721, must remain a priority.

The persecution of women and girls in Afghanistan likely constitutes a crime against humanity. I recall the International Criminal Court's jurisdiction and its role to advance accountability for that crime among many others committed. As long as they continue to disregard the most basic norms of human rights, we cannot see eye to eye with the Taliban.

Madam President,

The situation in Myanmar, especially for its women, continues to be of grave concern. Women have played a key role in resisting the military coup. And they have challenged long-prevailing gender norms in a patriarchal society.

I commend the important contributions and courage of all the women working for a democratic transition to a peaceful Myanmar. And I welcome today's briefer Wai Wai Nu, Founder and Executive Director of Women's Peace Network, representing those women. We have welcomed Security Council Resolution 2669, but also deplore the lack of its implementation. It is time for the Council to follow up in light of the dire situation on the ground, in particular in the humanitarian area. If Council action continues to be unavailable, the General Assembly has to step in, as it did in 2021 by adopting resolution 75/287 which Liechtenstein was proud to lead on. The veto – or the threat of the veto – is no longer the last word on matter of peace and security, thanks to the Veto Initiative which has resonated so strongly in the membership and will hopefully prompt the Council to live up to its responsibility under the UN Charter.

I thank you.