



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

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY, FIRST COMMITTEE**

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS

**STATEMENT BY Ms. MYRIAM OEHRI, FIRST SECRETARY**

Chairperson,

Let me begin by thanking you and your bureau, as well as the Secretary and her team, for the work that has gone into the preparation of this year's First Committee. The solid organizational set-up has not only been important for the First Committee, but also to other Committees in their preparations. Thank you in particular for the painstaking work of finding modalities that help the Committee maintain business continuity during its second pandemic-affected session. We have full confidence in the Bureau to guide us to a successful conclusion of our work and Liechtenstein will support you in this regard as best we can.

Chairperson,

Liechtenstein is pleased that the First Committee meets this year in marginally improved circumstances to last year. Many of us here in New York have been vaccinated, which has saved countless lives and livelihoods. But this remains an exceptionally insecure moment, due to vaccine inequality, climate change, and economic hardship. The status of international law similarly continues to be fragile, as the aggressive postures of a few States to secure themselves through military means negatively affects the security of all States, in every layer of the atmosphere. The flow of weapons into conflict areas continues unabated, at times in open violation of Security Council arms embargoes or decisions by the General Assembly. In particular,

the illicit trade and misuse of small arms and light weapons places civilians, including women and children, at daily risk and hampers sustainable development, including SDG 5 on gender equality. Regional arms control agreements remain under significant threat. In our own region, security has been weakened by withdrawals from the Open Skies Treaty and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. And outer space risks rapid militarization, to the detriment of the important peaceful uses of space technology for sustainable development, information technology and connectivity. In response, the First Committee is well advised to consider the wider security context of its work. Legal agreements in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation form an integral part of the international legal framework, and their erosion undermines the fundamental principle of the rule of law at the international level. We must uphold the primacy of the law and the prohibition of the use of force or its threat, which are at the very core of the UN Charter.

Chairperson,

There have been some positive signs this year with respect to our nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Liechtenstein welcomes the extension of the New START treaty through 2026 and the intention of the parties to the JCPOA to resume talks, and encourages all parties to work in good faith toward their swift and successful conclusion to ensure the full implementation of this important agreement. At the same time, nuclear powers continue to seek to modernize and enhance their capabilities in the name of deterrence, escalating tensions and enhancing the momentum of nuclear proliferation, with dire consequences for global security. Every announcement of plans to stock-up and modernize nuclear arsenals and lower thresholds for their use, pushes the Non-Proliferation Treaty's ultimate purpose further into the distance. The NPT once charted a course to eliminate nuclear weapons by making it illegal to acquire them. Its lack of implementation is read by some as an incentive to do the opposite. The nuclear arms race runs directly counter to the article VI obligations of nuclear weapon States and thereby also threatens the important gains achieved under the non-proliferation pillar. The balance that the NPT originally represented has been continuously shifted in a way that threatens the integrity of the treaty as a whole. Restoring that balance should be the primary objective of the Tenth NPT

Review Conference in January. Liechtenstein will participate in the Conference and looks forward to a substantial result that builds on past agreements. The marking of 25 years of the CTBT this year was an opportunity to reflect on the clear contribution it has made to establishing a de facto moratorium on nuclear tests, but also on the frustrating reality that the remaining Annex II states continue to prevent its full entry into force. All the while, the DPRK shows no signs of taking verifiable steps towards nuclear disarmament, publicly flouting the long-held taboo over the conduct of nuclear tests as well as relevant Security Council resolutions.

Chairperson,

Nuclear weapons are not only an existential threat to our planet, they are also an inherent challenge to international humanitarian law. The principles of necessity, proportionality and distinction leave no space for inherently indiscriminate weapons. The highest legal authority, the International Court of Justice, in its landmark opinion of 1996 has advised States to that effect. Liechtenstein has joined the collective effort to abolish nuclear weapons, and therefore welcomes the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in January 2021. The TPNW enhances the legal framework for nuclear disarmament and brings it into line with regimes for the other weapons of mass destruction. We look forward to contributing to the first Meeting of States Parties in March. In addition, Liechtenstein reiterates our commitment to ratifying the TPNW after having signed the Treaty in 2017 at the earliest possibility.

Chairperson,

The use of chemical weapons is an abhorrent threat to civilian lives and a grave violation of international law. Its absolute prohibition on the use of chemical weapons is openly violated in the Syrian conflict, undermining one of the strongest norms of customary international law. At the same time, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which plays a vital role in upholding these norms, faces increasing political pressure simply for implementing its mandate. Our societies also witness a new and aggravated threat from chemical weapons in the civilian context, notably through the use of the severe nerve agents known as Novichoks. Liechtenstein appreciates the work of the OPCW in investigating these attacks, which must now

be used to bring those responsible to justice. Liechtenstein also continues to support the work of independent bodies such as the Syria Accountability Mechanism (IIIM) and the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team for their concrete and thorough contributions to holding perpetrators to account, and calls on Syria to cooperate with inspections.

Chairperson,

Liechtenstein welcomes the First Committee's consideration of cybersecurity in its agenda through its subsidiary bodies, the Open-Ended Working Group and the Group of Governmental Experts. With regard to the OEWG in particular, Liechtenstein congratulates our colleague Ambassador Lauber from Switzerland in finalizing its report in March this year, and looks forward to the continuation of this work during its new mandate from 2021-2025. Militarized cyber-attacks against critical infrastructure including telecommunications networks, power grids, health programs as well as political and judicial systems undermine democratic norms and expose State institutions and their populations to great risk. The prohibition of the use of force, except when authorized by the Security Council or carried out in self-defense, must be enforced everywhere, including when conducted in cyberspace. Despite a common understanding that international law, in particular the UN Charter, fully applies to cyberspace, activities by States and other actors to move the domain of warfare to cyberspace have met with little consequence. Liechtenstein has explored the role the International Criminal Court may play in the regulation of warfare as it evolves in the 21st century by creating a Council of Advisers on the Application of the Rome Statute to Cyberwarfare. We are pleased to announce the publication of the Council of Advisers' report, which will be presented during International Law Week this year. The report aims to help develop a clearer understanding of how the Rome Statute applies in the cyber context.

Chairperson,

Liechtenstein supports a new regulatory framework for lethal autonomous weapons systems, in the form of a legally binding instrument to ensure a human component in the decision-making processes of such systems. Such a legal instrument should place prohibitions on lethal

autonomous weapons systems that cannot be used with meaningful human control across its entire life cycle, which can help to ensure compliance with applicable law, including international humanitarian law. The Alliance for Multilateralism has made an important political commitment to advance this agenda with its declaration on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), which Liechtenstein fully supports.

I thank you.