



STÄNDIGE MISSION
DES FÜRSTENTUMS LIECHTENSTEIN

MISSION PERMANENTE
DE LA PRINCIPAUTÉ DE LIECHTENSTEIN

PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN

31th Session of the Human Rights Council High-Level Segment

Statement by H.E. Aurelia Frick Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein

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Mr. President,

The goals and targets we have set for this Council ten years ago were highly ambitious. It is now the moment to ask ourselves what we have achieved and where we must do better.

Looking back at this first decade of the Council's existence, we have indeed reason to be proud: Even though the Council was established against the opposition of a small number of states, the Council has quickly been able to create a political consensus. We may not always agree on the various substantive questions in this forum. But I believe that we all can agree on the unique role and responsibility of this Council. Today, the Council is one of the international community's most important instruments in promoting universal respect for the protection of human rights, as well as addressing critical situations of human rights violations.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) ranks among the most obvious successes of this Council. Against all odds, it has concluded a review of the human rights record of the entire membership. It has proved itself as a powerful tool which stimulated internal debate and triggered change in a large number of countries, including in my own. As the second cycle of the UPR draws closer to an end, we must think of ways to further strengthen the catalyst role of the UPR, including on how it can best contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Council's success entails its own challenges, though: It is increasingly suffocating under the ever growing number of resolutions, panels and mandates. During the last year, we have seen a lot of important efforts to make this body more efficient and to increase its impact on

the ground. We commend the former President's work in this regard and welcome the commitment of President Choi Kyong Lim to continue this important task. However, we must not turn a blind eye to another challenge we are confronted with: the severe lack of funding of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. This is an impediment to the noble goals of this Council. And to be quite clear: This affects not only the Council, but the UN as a whole: With one of the three pillars of the UN severely underfunded, the United Nations' mission as a whole is at stake.

While we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of this body, human rights violations around the globe continue to persist. Conflicts and situations of violence are on the rise, and instability seems to become the new normality. We face unprecedented levels of displacement, increasing radicalization and extremism, terrorist threats and continued patterns of discrimination and marginalization. But we must not allow ourselves to act as defeatists. It is my conviction that the international community's response to this complexity of challenges must be firmly anchored in respect for international human rights law and international law in general.

Let me emphasize an issue where it is particularly relevant that we do not deviate from a human rights-based approach: How can we safeguard the right to privacy and other fundamental rights in the age of surveillance, interception of communication and mass collection of data? The terrorist threat we are facing today makes this discussion more urgent and necessary than ever before. It is the duty and responsibility of the state to take appropriate measures to protect their citizens from terrorism. We must make sure that counterterrorism policies and measures to protect national security do neither undermine our freedoms nor compromise our fundamental values. We also have to discuss the right to

privacy in a broader context, in particular the role and responsibility of the private sector. Building on the achievements within the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly concerning the right to privacy until now, we are looking forward to deepening the discussion on this issue. The next opportunity is the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy who will present his first report at this session.

Mr. President,

The level of success of the Council is often measured by the degree to which it is able to discharge its responsibility to address specific human rights emergencies. And it is true; there are situations in which our response remains blatantly insufficient. Of continued concern is the situation in Syria where the failure of international diplomacy has manifested itself most shockingly – where the appalling suffering of civilians has continuously reached new heights – where humanitarian law is disregarded systematically.

We call on all parties to strictly comply with international humanitarian law. Ending impunity for crimes committed against innocent civilians in Syria must remain a top priority of this body. We reiterate our call on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC. It is our firm conviction that any realistic prospect for a political solution needs to address accountability.

Mr. President,

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a sign of hope: it is a recognition of the fact that sustainable development is only possible if strongly grounded in international human rights standards. The SDGs also present us an opportunity to do better on the inclusion of women. The Agenda not only includes a stand-alone goal on women, but contains a number of targets of particular importance to women. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large. Gender equality is more than just a human right. Therefore, it is crucial for national governments to focus on a swift and thorough implementation of the SDGs.

As one of the last countries in Europe, Liechtenstein has introduced the women's suffrage only 30 years ago. Much has changed to the better since then. Achieving gender parity is a key focus on my agenda and I am determined to bring forward the implementation of the SDGs in my country.

In founding the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly has stipulated that the Council shall work in close cooperation with civil society. And indeed, civil society is a valuable and indispensable partner to our work. I am proud to say that in Liechtenstein we have a well-established and regular dialogue between the Government and NGOs. We are convinced that civil society is not a threat, but an essential partner who enables us to base our deliberations on different voices and perspectives. If we want our work to be meaningful and legitimate, if we want to work towards solutions, we better listen to its concerns.

Disturbingly, reprisals against persons who cooperate with UN human rights representatives and mechanisms persist and have even become more severe over time. This is unacceptable. Efforts to counter these intolerable incidents have been made, but we need a more resolute and united response from states, including the long-overdue creation of a focal point on reprisals mandated by this body more than two years ago.

To conclude, let me seize the moment to remember what this body was created for in the first place: For the victims of human rights violations and abuses all around the world, people who place their faith and hope in this organization. Let us not deceive their hopes.