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## **Statement at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council**

**High-Level Segment**

**22/23 February 2021**

**by H.E. Dr. Katrin Eggenberger**

**Minister of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture**

Madam President, Excellencies, Colleagues, Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address the Human Rights Council, even though I would have preferred to be in Geneva right now and meeting you all in person.

We were pleased to see that the Council managed to function throughout the last year and fulfill its programme of work, notably as the only UN body. This was only possible due to the tremendous efforts by former President of the Council, Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger from Austria, and her team. We are also very pleased to see Ambassador Nazhat Khan from Fiji to have the presidency of the Council for 2021.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, existing inequalities have further exacerbated. We are concerned about the **negative impact of the pandemic on women and children** who have been more exposed to domestic violence as a result of the measures taken to address the pandemic.

Under the current circumstances, it is important that we show flexibility in the modalities of the Council in order to keep it running. Liechtenstein, together with a large group of States, has led on a resolution to allow **e-voting** for the General Assembly in exceptional circumstances when the Assembly is unable to meet in person for a prolonged period of time. As a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council may also apply that procedure. We encourage the President to keep this option in mind as we begin a new cycle.

Madam President,

Together with Germany, Brazil, Mexico, and Austria, Liechtenstein will run a resolution at this session of the Human Rights Council to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the **right to privacy** in the digital age. We are convinced that the situation of surveillance, the additional threats of artificial intelligence, machine learning, tracking and profiling will only increase the importance of the Council addressing this issue.

Liechtenstein will continue to stress the importance of **accountability** for serious human rights violations and violations of international law, in particular when it comes to the

most serious crimes. The current situation of the pandemic also created difficult challenges for dedicated mechanisms such as the IIIM and we were pleased to see that they found creative ways to continue their important work, while underscoring that this should not be precedence for their functioning.

We are appalled by the recent removal of the civilian Government in **Myanmar** by the military as the coup represents a clear danger of additional escalation of the already serious pre-existing human rights crisis in Myanmar. Liechtenstein calls upon the Myanmar military to immediately lift the state of emergency and release all arbitrarily detained persons. Independent investigations into all human rights violations need to be ensured. The proceedings of the ICC - albeit on a limited set of crimes in the absence of a Security Council referral - continue to be the most promising pathway to criminal accountability in Myanmar alongside full cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and with the Human Rights Council and its mandate holders, in particular the IIMM.

We are furthermore concerned about the situation in **Syria**, as the conflict faces a sad ten years anniversary. Liechtenstein continues to call on the Government of Syria and other States to fully cooperate with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria (IIIM) and reiterates its principled position that the situation in Syria should be referred to the ICC by the Security Council. There is no sustainable future for Syria without justice for the countless atrocities committed and still ongoing.

We are concerned about the recent wave of arbitrary arrests, allegations of torture and the closure of civic space in **Belarus** in the aftermath of the presidential elections in summer 2020 which were neither free nor fair. We call on the Government of Belarus to immediately stop the violence against peaceful protesters and thoroughly investigate all allegations, to release arbitrarily arrested people, bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice and fully cooperate with the Human Rights Council and the OSCE.

Madam President,

It is my pleasure to inform the Human Rights Council about progress made by Liechtenstein in the implementation of international human rights treaties. On 8 September 2020 we have signed the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and are preparing for its ratification**. Moreover, Liechtenstein is currently finalizing the preparatory work concerning the ratification of the Istanbul-Convention. In the course of the ratification process, a further strengthening of the protection of victims and witnesses of gender-based, sexual and domestic violence in civil rights procedures is planned.

Before concluding, please let me touch upon one issue that is important for Liechtenstein and also for me personally. Liechtenstein strongly believes that **Civil Society actors** are key players in ensuring that the Human Rights Council can fulfill its mandate. Liechtenstein is very concerned about the increasing attacks and reprisals, both online and offline, against human rights defenders in many countries as well as against individuals and groups seeking to cooperate or having cooperated with the United Nations. In particular, we are concerned of the use of COVID-19 measures to silence civil society actors. All this is unacceptable. We strongly condemn any reprisals against civil society and its representatives under any circumstances.

Last but not least, I would like to express our support to you, Madam President. Liechtenstein will in its national capacity and its capacity as the Coordinator of the WEOG group for 2021 stand ready to work constructively with you.

I thank you.