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SECURITY COUNCIL - ARRIA FORMULA MEETING ON “SEA-LEVEL RISE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY”

STATEMENT BY Ms. MYRIAM OEHRI

CHARGÉE D’AFFAIRES A.I.

Excellency,

Thank you for bringing this important issue to our attention. Sea-level rise demonstrates perhaps more clearly than any other phenomenon that climate change is not only a factor exacerbating security threats on the Council’s agenda, but is itself a threat to the security of hundreds of millions of people. Liechtenstein appreciates your acknowledgement of this fact in your concept note, and hopes that the Council will move forward in addressing climate change as a peace and security peril in itself, in line with a human security perspective.

Such a perspective would also build on work of the Council and other relevant UN entities, notably the Open Debate held in 2015 on “Peace and Security Challenges Facing Small Island Developing States”, and the Secretary-General’s report A/64/350 on “Climate Change and its Possible Security Implications”. Both of these highlight the specific vulnerability of small island developing states, particularly those that are low-lying. We know that only drastic reductions to global emissions will spare them the most serious consequences of sea-level rise. This is true for atoll nations whose groundwater is at risk of saltwater intrusion, and whose territory is at risk of inundation. It is also true for volcanic island nations whose populations predominantly live close to sea-level, and are in addition often at greater risk of natural disasters such as hurricanes.

In addition to climate action, the international community must also ensure that these particularly affected States and countries have the legal certainty to make their own decisions on behalf of their populations going forward. Liechtenstein therefore supports ongoing efforts at the International Law Commission to clarify aspects of international law relevant to sea-level rise, in relation to the law of the sea, the protection of persons affected by sea-level rise, and statehood. While there have been many references to the 'existential threat' that climate change poses in these cases, including in the concept note for this debate, any decisions for how relevant States and countries conceptualize themselves in the future must continue to be underpinned by their inalienable right to self-determination.

I thank you.