



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

NEW YORK, 24 SEPTEMBER 2019

**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
74TH SESSION
GENERAL DEBATE**

ADDRESS BY

**H.S.H. HEREDITARY PRINCE ALOIS VON UND ZU LIECHTENSTEIN
ACTING HEAD OF STATE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN**

Mr. President

It is an honor to speak before this Assembly today – in the year when Liechtenstein celebrates its 300th anniversary. We are proud and blessed to look back at three centuries of absence of armed conflict, good relations with our neighbors and a trajectory from poverty to economic prosperity and political stability. And we are grateful for the numerous partnerships that have made this journey possible. An active foreign policy and diplomacy has been crucial for our survival as one of the smallest States in Europe. Without our international connections, we would not have been recognized as a sovereign State. Nor could we have consolidated our position at the Vienna Congress or survived as a sovereign State during the difficult time of two World Wars. Working together with others on the basis of common rules is not just something that we conceptually subscribe to. It is an indispensable part of our history as a country and of our success as a society. Joining the United Nations in 1990 was therefore an organic continuation of what has consistently been our approach to foreign policy. Almost thirty years ago now, securing our sovereign equality was a key driver in becoming a member of this Assembly. But we have never looked at this important step as an end in itself. Rather it has given us the means to help develop a rules-based international order and the rule of law as an expression of that sovereign equality. Today, more than ever, we are committed to these goals and the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Mr. President

60 years ago still, Liechtenstein was a poor agrarian emigration country, with a weak economy and very limited employment opportunities. Our path to one of the most industrialized countries, with a highly diversified and innovative economy, was made possible through the opening of global markets based on common rules. Today, we are witnessing difficult trends – a more unstable and multipolar global order, an increase in protectionism, a weakening of international cooperation and the erosion of internationally agreed standards and the rule of law. We will continue our engagement for the respect of international law, the bedrock of the United Nations, and work with those who are committed to multilateralism. As a small State, we will always stand with the rule of law and against the rule of might. And we will continue applying the important lesson from our history – consistent foreign policy investments pay important dividends domestically. Indeed, the United Nations is the key forum to promote these goals. This is not a time of easy successes and quick wins for the United Nations. But it is still a time of opportunity. The trust of the international public in the United Nations continues to be very high – surprisingly high, one is tempted to say. More than ever, people around the world understand that the big threats that we are facing, including to the survival of our planet, require all of us to work together. This is the political capital we are given and that we have to use in the conversation with those Governments who tend to look for solutions elsewhere or simply deny the challenges.

Mr. President

The 2030 Agenda remains a central blueprint for our common future, with the enormous challenge of climate change at its core. The Sustainable Development

Goals have galvanized important initiatives in Liechtenstein. I am particularly encouraged by the positive response of our private sector – for years, we have been talking about the need to involve a broader range of stakeholders than just Governments. Today, the need to involve the private sectors, but also local communities, cities and other stakeholders is overwhelming. Liechtenstein has already developed a number of sustainability initiatives which can potentially be of interest to our international partners. If we can continue being innovative and creative in this area, we can generate an interest in our sustainability initiatives that matches the one for the products and services of our industrial and our financial sector. In fact, one of our central sustainability initiatives is a public-private partnership in which our financial sector has a key role: the “Liechtenstein Initiative” to create a Financial Sector Commission on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. The Blueprint produced by the Financial Sector Commission, to be launched this coming Friday, 27 September, offers a toolkit for financial institutions to help fight modern slavery, one of the big organized crime models of our time.

Mr. President

I am pleased to be able to witness the discussions at the High-Level Political Forum during my visit in New York. We should all welcome the strong engagement of young people on questions of sustainability. Their voice calls for intergenerational justice as a fundamental principle of our policy-making. We should take this voice seriously. For the first time, Liechtenstein has appointed a youth delegate. She was part of the delegation that presented our first report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda here in July. It is certainly our responsibility to make the right policy-decisions. But in so doing, we also have the responsibility to be aware of the

consequences for those who will have to live with their effects also in the years beyond 2030.

Mr. President

We are committed to strengthening international law. This entails both securing respect for the norms that we have agreed, but also developing new norms where necessary. The rule of law at the international level and international justice are crucially important for us. We joined the International Court of Justice many years before we became a member of the United Nations and have accepted its compulsory jurisdiction. More recently we have been strongly committed to furthering international criminal justice. And we have had considerable success in this respect. The International Criminal Court remains the center of the international fight against impunity. At a time when agreed international rules such as the Geneva Conventions are routinely ignored, it has become even more important. The performance of the court has not always matched our expectations. And of course the court is particularly exposed to the headwinds caused by isolationist and nationalist trends. This must be an incentive for us to increase our political investment. In helping the court improve its performance we can make it less vulnerable against political attacks. We have also led the effort to bring accountability for the crimes committed in the conflict in Syria. The creation of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism was a big success for this Assembly and a crucial step to help shape the future of the country. The political discussions on a post-conflict Syria have to include the dimension of accountability for the atrocities committed during the conflict. These discussions will not be easy. But they will be necessary to create a sustainable peace for the Syrian people.

Mr. President

This organization was created to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. It was indeed the disaster of World War II that led to the creation of this organization. There have been other essential peace projects – for us of course, the European Union has been central in this respect and secured a period of peace that our region had never witnessed before. But as the global peace project, the United Nations remains unique. Its success in preventing conflict has been mixed, due in particular to the divisions among the Permanent Members of its Security Council and, recently, an excessive use of the veto power. But today more so than in a long time, armed conflict of unforeseeable consequences is a real danger. The existence of nuclear weapons and the options presented through cyber warfare illustrate the incredible level of risk and the potential devastating impact of armed conflict today. All of us in this room have subscribed to the very strict rules embodied on the use of force in the UN Charter. Armed conflict is illegal, except when the use of force is authorized by the Security Council or if carried out in self-defense. The most serious forms of the illegal use of force are also a criminal offense now, both in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and in many domestic legal systems. These are new legal norms that we need more than ever and that also apply to new methods of warfare.

Mr. President

In conclusion, I wish to address a concern that my father Prince Hans-Adam, presented to this Assembly, as the very first of our initiatives presented at the United Nations: As a small State, we have consistently stood up for the right of self-

determination. It is one of the fundamental principles of international law and as such enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations – and has been incorporated in the Liechtenstein constitution. Many of the conflicts today have self-determination claims at their root. If not addressed in an effective and timely manner, the resulting controversies can lead to violence and, in extreme cases, to armed conflict. We continue to believe that we need models of innovative application of the right of self-determination in cases where independence is not a political option. Our work on this has extended over several decades now and we will continue working to make this part of our contribution to achieving the goals reflected in the Sustainable Development agenda.

I thank you.