



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

NEW YORK, 21 SEPTEMBER 2023

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 78TH SESSION
GENERAL DEBATE

STATEMENT BY H.E. MRS. DOMINIQUE HASLER
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President

We gather this year

under ever more daunting challenges:

Our window to address climate change is narrowing rapidly.

Progress in achieving

the Sustainable Development Goals is stagnating—

in part, it is even being reversed.

There have never been more conflicts,

since the creation of the United Nations.

The number of displaced persons is at record levels

and food insecurity has doubled since 2020.

Children are subject to more suffering than ever.

And urgently needed political consensus on key agendas

is becoming more challenging.

The ability of the United Nations to function as

the peace organization for our world is increasingly paralyzed.

It is our joint responsibility to safeguard

the international order for future generations.

In doing so, we have an opportunity:
to make the United Nations stronger, more equitable, more resilient.
We are ready to tackle this task, together with you,
with a sense of deep responsibility,
but also with courage and confidence in our ability to succeed.

There is a common thread
to the various challenges we are facing:
the rule of law.

Which means

that relations between States
are governed by the law.

That this law is the result of international agreements.

That it applies to everyone.

And that there are consequences if it is violated.

This was the spirit that guided those
who gathered in San Francisco in 1945 to agree
on the Charter of the United Nations –
the most successful and most impactful treaty ever adopted.

At its very heart,
the United Nations is a peace organization.
It has risen from the ashes
of two devastating world wars
and makes a powerful promise
to the future generations
that the UN Charter addresses:
That we, gathered in this Assembly,
we will not allow unlawful war-making to bring devastation,
human suffering and instability to the peoples that we represent.
As leaders we have to ask, self-critically: Are we truly trying hard
enough to put these promises into action?

Illegal warfare is
the biggest challenge to this organization.
And there is no doubt
that the unprovoked and in its core colonizing war
that Russia has been waging against its neighbor Ukraine,
a founding member of the United Nations,
is the most egregious, blatant and manifest violation
of the prohibition of the illegal use of force
since the creation of the United Nations.

For us to stand up together against this act of aggression means,
most importantly,
standing up for the international legal order.

This order is certainly the only security guarantee – especially for us as
a small state but also for the international community.

This Assembly is the bedrock of genuine multilateralism,
based on the principle of sovereign equality.

As such, it has lived up admirably to the challenge
it was handed by the Security Council,
paralyzed by the use of the veto.

Together, we have called for the complete withdrawal
of all Russian troops from Ukrainian territory.

We have together defined the parameters for a just peace
that we all want to see as soon as possible.

And we have made together the legal determination
that the actions by Russia against Ukraine
amount to an act of aggression.

We yet have to take the next obvious step together:
to ensure criminal accountability
for this act of aggression
for the individuals who have ordered it,
in line with international law.

We will continue our conversations
with all of you to enable us to achieve this.

This serves the goal of a just peace for Ukraine –
in accordance with the terms defined by us, in this Assembly.
But it will also have a catalytic effect of far wider reach.

In ensuring criminal accountability
for the most manifest violations of the United Nations Charter,
we will also protect ourselves,
in particular the small States among us –
our own sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Our international order
is founded on the prohibition of the illegal use of force.
For this prohibition to be effective,
it must be backed up by accountability – by the rule of law.

This of course
is the task of the International Criminal Court –
established 25 years ago with competence
over the most serious crimes under international law,
the crime of aggression among them.

We have to give the Court
the competence to exercise full jurisdiction as quickly as possible,
so it can fulfil its task with respect to the illegal use of force.

Mr. President

Aggression is a fundamental challenge to all of us
who have signed on to the UN Charter.

At its core, the United Nations is and must
continue to be a peace organization.

For billions of individuals, this building embodies the promise
that we will respond collectively
to those who openly undermine peace and security.

This is why Liechtenstein has joined
this organization over three decades ago.

This is the pledge
made to future generations in San Francisco.

And it is the expectation that our people have.

The UN has evolved tremendously since its creation.
It has been the crucial force in advancing international law.
Its role as provider of humanitarian assistance
has become irreplaceable.
Its agencies and programs
carry out functions of enormous importance
to individuals around the globe.
Yet, its core mission is and remains,
the maintenance of peace and security.
And this is the role that we are challenged to safeguard.
This is a difficult task.

It is a fact that the Security Council is often unable to act.
The deep political divisions among the Permanent Members
are likely a reality for years to come.

The pernicious effects of the veto are being mitigated,
but they persist often to devastating effect
for the people affected.

Next year's Summit of the Future
is an essential collective test for all of us.

We must show our ability
to find ways to ensure collective action
when the Security Council fails in its tasks.

This Assembly will therefore have to play a central role
in a new agenda for peace.

And we can do more
to bring the Security Council's practice
in line with the law
we all have subscribed
to when joining the United Nations.

We are proud to have presented to this Assembly the Veto Initiative,
which ensures accountability and institutional balance.

We should now focus on ensuring
that those who are parties to a dispute
do not participate in the decision-making on these disputes.

This is simply the law in the UN Charter –
and its application has been neglected so far.

Mr. President,

In recent years,

climate change has occupied an increasingly central place in our discussions.

This hall has seen summit meeting after summit meeting on this issue.

This year again, we are urgently reminded of the limited window we have to address the climate crisis.

From weather extremes to sea level rise, all regions of the world are affected by climate change.

But those who have done the least to cause the crisis in the first place are the ones most affected.

We certainly are in the fight of our lives, as Secretary General Guterres has said.

However, as we are gathering here, we are not on track to win this fight.

We hope to see significant progress
at the COP meeting in Abu Dhabi later this year.

But that alone will not be enough.

For climate change as well,
the law must be guiding us.

This is why we have strongly supported the request
for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice
on the question of climate change.

We are confident
that the Court will help us have clarity regarding
the complex legal questions concerning climate change
and thus assist in our common fight
against this most existential threat.

Mr. President

This initiative, led by Vanuatu
was yet another example of leadership from small States,
a testament to genuine and effective multilateralism.

Small States like ourselves –
and we are indeed a majority in this Assembly –
need the United Nations.

But the United Nations also needs us – and more so than ever.

It is us small States who look automatically
beyond our national interests.

We understand that our success
does not have to come at the cost of someone else's loss.

We look for partnerships as a matter of course
and as a way to success.

And we work for the rule of law
as a matter of enlightened self-interest.

At a time of competitive alliance-building,
our ability and willingness to forge common ground
is indispensable for the future success of the United Nations.

We can and we will play an important role
in shaping the Summit of the Future.

Mr. President,

The 2030 Agenda remains one
of the most successful expressions of common ground
from the past decade.

It plays an ever more important role
in shaping Government policies.

And it is deeply embedded
in the consciousness of our people.

The SDGs may well be
the most widely known agreement
the UN has reached in the last decades.

And yet, halfway through the implementation process,
the picture is rather bleak:

The number of people living in extreme poverty
is higher than before the COVID pandemic.

Hunger levels are back to 15 years ago.

At the current pace, full gender equality is not just decades away,
but in fact centuries.

And the lack of progress in our constituencies
is mirrored in the difficulty to find political consensus
on the way forward.

This negative trend needs to be reversed now!

The 2030 Agenda is the only global roadmap
we have to overcome the multiple crises we face today.

Liechtenstein's strong commitment to the SDGs is also reflected in its second Voluntary National Review I was honored to present earlier this year.

Our Official Development Assistance spending has been increased by 22% in comparison to 2018.

This is meant to help reverse the negative trends in the fields of poverty reduction, food security, access to education as well as climate protection.

All Government bills are now evaluated against the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our commitment to the 2030 Agenda is a genuine expression of multilateralism – of which we need to see more.

Mr. President

Gender equality is a central part of this agenda.

We will not forget the countless women who suffer from violence and oppression worldwide.

We will continue calling out situations of systematic gender persecution, from Afghanistan to Iran.

And we will continue
calling for the empowerment of women,
to support the bravery of women,
who stand up to demand political change,
from Belarus to Myanmar.

We need women's voices and active role
in our national politics and in international leadership positions,
in particular in peace operations.

Mr. President

The international community faces major
challenges that will shape the future of us all.

As highlighted at the beginning:

By signing the UN Charter,
we have given future generations
the promise of a prosperous future.

We can no longer afford to remain inactive and divided on key issues.
Therefore, we have to face difficult questions
and different interests.

Even if solving these problems is not easy,
we must never lose sight of the UN's very main purpose,
which is to ensure global peace.

This requires the contribution of all states,
large and small.

Rule of law, democracy, social justice, tolerance and
the ability to engage in dialogue
are fundamental conditions for peace.

In the spirit of San Francisco,
Liechtenstein will continue to advocate strongly
for these values within the international community.

I thank you.