



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**OPEN DEBATE OF THE
SECURITY COUNCIL:
PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT**

STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President

The World Summit has made it clear yet again: The protection of civilians in armed conflict is a major challenge and concern of the international community. Several important decisions were taken by our leaders and are reflected in the World Summit Outcome. They range from the affirmation of the responsibility to protect and the particular emphasis on the pressing need to adequately address all forms of violence against women and children to the resolve to increase the protection of internally displaced persons and to ensure safe and unhindered access of humanitarian actors to populations in need. The call of our leaders to conclude negotiations on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel was also of particular importance. We are pleased to note that the General Assembly adopted that protocol just yesterday, providing for substantial expansion of the scope of legal protection for such personnel. We invite all States to become parties to both the Protocol and the 1994 Convention, in order to strengthen and universalize this important legal regime.

Mr. President

The recognition of the responsibility of the international community to protect civilian populations when their governments fail to do so constitutes a major breakthrough in our common endeavor to prevent genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The main obligation for its implementation naturally falls on the Security Council. The Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide can play an important role in this respect. The Council has to ensure that disgraceful inaction such as in the case of the genocide in Rwanda cannot occur anymore. This responsibility leads almost inevitably to the conclusion that collective action to prevent and respond to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes must not be made impossible by a non-concurring vote of one of the Permanent Members of the Council. This principle was proposed by the High-level Panel and taken up in the draft resolution on working methods of the Security Council prepared by a group of countries including Liechtenstein. The rest of the membership also has a responsibility in this respect in that they can bring situations to the attention of the Security Council, in open debates and through other means. In particular, Article 8 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was adopted on this day in 1948, allows any Contracting Party to call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take appropriate action.

Mr. President

The achievement on the responsibility to protect makes the absence of a reference to the area of impunity in the WSO even more anachronistic. More advances have been made in this area than in most others. Transitional justice is an inevitable element of any serious discussion of post-conflict situations. There is now a close and well-established relationship between the International Criminal Court and the

United Nations - both through the adoption of a relationship agreement between the two organizations and the Security Council referral of the situation in Darfur to the Court. Prevention is indeed the key aspect in the protection of civilians. Preventive action can, however, only be effective if it is made clear that abuses against civilian populations, often carried out against their most vulnerable members, in particular women and children, are violations of international law that will not go unpunished. An unequivocal and firm stance of the Security Council that there will not be impunity for such crimes would have a strong deterrent effect in any situation and thus serve as a very useful tool of prevention.

Mr. President

Such a firm stance of the Security Council was expressed by the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict. Our leaders welcomed this resolution as a landmark decision and reaffirmed their commitment to promote and protect the rights and welfare of children in armed conflicts. We commend the convening of the first meeting of the Council's working group and look forward to the full implementation of that resolution. In order to assess the progress made in this regard, we would welcome a decision by the Council to hold an open debate on this issue in the first quarter of next year. One of the most tragic aspects of our collective failure to adequately protect civilians in situations of armed conflict over the past five years is, as the Secretary General's reports points out, the fact that women and children have continued to suffer extraordinary hardship and violence. It is high time to reverse this trend and take effective measures with a tangible impact on the ground. The adoption of a strong resolution on the protection of civilians, which also responds to the need for more consistent and accurate reporting of protection-related incidents, would certainly go a long way towards achieving this goal.

I thank you.