



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. KATRIN EGGENBERGER
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, JUSTICE AND CULTURE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN**

Madam President,

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the 2030 Agenda – a key success of multilateral diplomacy of recent times. It also marks the beginning of the decade of action – a ten-year countdown for all of us to accelerate our actions to fully implement the SDGs. Thanks to the immense technological progress in the last decades we are able to convene this year’s HLPF virtually. At the same time, we share the hope that we are soon able again to gather in person, which is of essential importance for effective diplomacy.

All States have been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic in various ways. We have faced an unparalleled health crisis. And we have also been exposed to its severe socio-economic effects – effects that are likely to put a long-lasting burden upon our countries and societies. Our institutions and the trust our people place in them are being tested in very serious ways. The current crisis should serve as a stark reminder of the shortcomings of the international community in effectively implementing the SDGs – had we been more effective in the past five years, we would find ourselves in a better position in fighting the pandemic and its consequences together. Let me offer a few examples that illustrate how the 2030 Agenda provides the parameters for responding to the pandemic:

- It underlines the importance of the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms – preconditions for trust in institutions and good governance.
- It highlights the important role of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions – which are particularly needed in times of crises.
- It underlines the need to reduce inequalities among and within States – many of which are exacerbated in the time of the pandemic.
- It emphasizes the urgent need to protect the environment and address climate change and biodiversity loss – all of which prevent pandemics from spreading so easily and contribute to the health and wellbeing of people and the planet.
- And it emphasizes the urgent need for strengthening partnerships at all levels in order to increase the preparedness and the response to the present and future pandemics – partnerships are crucial for building capacities and resilience in all countries.

Our global response to COVID-19 should thus be guided by the SDGs which provide a clear answer to the pandemic's causes and consequences. International cooperation and constructive and inclusive multilateralism with the UN at its center will furthermore be vital to build back better.

Madam President,

Building back better means not only to tackle symptoms of the pandemic and its harmful socio-economic effects. It means primarily to reassess and reform existing practices and policies that are discriminatory and harmful and, in particular, to address pervasive inequalities and injustices. The economic disruption and the likely growth of the informal economy caused by the pandemic has exacerbated people's vulnerability to labor exploitation, enslavement and trafficking. There is an estimated 40.3 million people living in modern slavery – a number which is likely to increase due to the pandemic. To bring this figure close to zero by 2030 – as we agreed to in SDG 8.7 – we would need to reduce the number of people affected by around 10'000 individuals per day. Strengthening our efforts to fight this criminal practice that also constitutes grave human rights violations is more important than ever.

The initiative "Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking" (FAST) – a private-public partnership between Liechtenstein, Australia and the Netherlands, and supported by United Nations University – has produced a Blueprint that provides a shared collective-action framework to readjust business

practices to help end slavery and trafficking. With the inclusion of finance that has an unparalleled influence over global business, the FAST initiative contributes to the implementation of SDG 17 in addition to SDGs 5, 8 and 16. We thank our partners, in particular the Deputy Secretary General, financial sector actors and survivors of slavery and trafficking for joining us in a side event a few days ago. We look forward to continuing our work together with our partners to make the FAST initiative a key initiative for the implementation of the SDGs.

Madam President,

Another focus area for building back better must be gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as enshrined in SDG 5. The pandemic has brought to light preexisting and pervasive gender inequality and, unfortunately, has exacerbated it in many ways. The limited implementation of the 2030 Agenda is catching up with us during the pandemic and cause for shadow pandemics for many women and girls worldwide: as frontline health workers, unpaid care workers or victims of domestic violence, child marriage and other harmful practices.

Against the background that women, and particularly mothers, have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, often having to juggle homeschooling and their jobs, the Liechtenstein Office of Education developed a range of measures to reduce the pressure on them, including out-of-home emergency care and a permanent support hotline. It furthermore provided free notebooks for all school children to ensure permanent access to education. The Government created a Working Group on Mental Health to assess the psychological effects of the pandemic on families.

By deciding to ratify the Istanbul Convention, the Government has furthermore committed to prevent and fight domestic and gender-based violence not only abroad but also at home. In line with recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), our National Police recently revised its internal guidelines and definition of domestic violence and trained its staff to improve the effectiveness of its interventions in cases of suspected domestic violence.

With these measures we contribute to women's and girls' equal enjoyment of human rights which is as important today as it was 25 years ago when we adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In order to effectively address the global challenges of our times, and prevent future ones, women must be enabled to play an active role, including in leadership positions. The full and

effective implementation of SDG 5 is not only an end in itself but also a precondition for a more peaceful and prosperous world for this and future generations.

I thank you.