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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
57<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
**ELIMINATION AND PREVENTION OF ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE  
AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. AURELIA FRICK**  
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions.

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Madame Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Violence against women and girls is a good focus for this year's session – it is a topic that sadly draws much media attention these days. We have made significant gains in the advancement of women worldwide. And yet, acts of violence against women persist in all parts of the world. I am thinking of

- Damini, victim of gang rape in India;
- women and girls suffering from the conflict in Syria;
- or the women in all our societies who are subject to domestic violence.

As a Minister of my country and as a woman I am shocked by these events. And I am determined to contribute what we can to bring about change.

The effects of such violence go far beyond its immediate physical and mental consequences. It poses a fundamental challenge to our societies, a threat to the full enjoyment of all human rights and to all the progress we have achieved. It slows down economic development and, in far too many places, it amounts to a tactic of war – and does further exacerbate armed conflict and its impact on societies. Violence is the greatest obstacle for countless women and girls all over the world to achieve full and effective equality. It threatens the gains we have made with respect to the situation of women – and thus warrants true political leadership. Judging by the number of Ministers and high-level officials attending this session, you all seem to share my conviction that this Commission can and must be the place to generate such leadership.

Each one of us must begin this work at home, in our own constituencies. As we come together here, we must learn from each other and work jointly on a powerful outcome of this session. We must leave no doubt that we are united in our determination to put an end to violence against women and girls. We need to put our domestic engines in motion and move forward with our agenda. This goes far beyond just changing the law – important as that is. Laws have to be understood and put into practice, if they are to change the lives of women and girls. Women must be given effective

access to justice, so that they can claim their rights. And most importantly, we must change the mind-sets of the perpetrators of violence and focus on prevention.

Madame Chair

Violence against women and girls affects every society around the world, every country. The sheer numbers speak volumes: Two out of three women experience gender-based violence at least once in their lifetime. What is even more outrageous: most perpetrators continue to go unpunished. There is still a systematic lack of accountability for many forms of violence against women and girls: domestic violence, violence based on harmful traditional and customary practices, and sexual violence in armed conflict among them. Victims are often left alone and unprotected when pursuing legal action, or otherwise effectively denied access to justice. It is essential that the Commission addresses this problem comprehensively.

A special effort is required to tackle the culture of impunity head-on. We cannot longer tolerate impunity for the worst forms of violence against women and girls as set out in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. I wish to pay particular tribute to all women and girls who are victims of the brutal violence in the Syrian civil war. I renew my call on the Security Council to refer this situation to the ICC, which will investigate and prosecute all those bearing the greatest responsibility, irrespective of their affiliation. I urge the Syrian opposition to commit itself to international humanitarian law – and to accountability. A functioning opposition Government should consider a self-referral of the situation in Syria (article 12.3 of the Rome Statute).

Madame Chair

The Security Council is an important partner in the fight to eliminate violence against women and girls. We commend the Council for its progress in the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Liechtenstein has for several years now contributed to these efforts. As the most recent example, I would like to highlight our series of panel discussions on Women, Peace and Security, dealing with all aspects of this agenda. One such panel was held yesterday, on women's empowerment in South Sudan.

Madame Chair

We need much greater progress in ensuring an adequate participation of women in peace talks. The inclusion of relevant issues in peace agreements is the exception rather than the rule: Of the nine peace agreements signed in 2012, only two address issues related to the inclusion and protection of women and girls. Peace accords that fail to include women in post-conflict governance often neglect their access to economic opportunities, justice and reparations. Thus, they not only do a disservice to women, but also to the long-term perspectives of the peace agreement. The United Nations should lead by example. We need to have more women as lead negotiators and ensure adequate gender expertise for peace processes. When sexual violence is not addressed in the early stages of mediation, it often remains ignored throughout the whole peace process. As a consequence, sexual violence continues long after the guns have gone silent. And UN-led peace processes must never grant amnesties for sexual and gender-based violence constituting genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Madame Chair

It is truly inspiring to come together with so many leaders at this session, and to see so many women among them. I am personally committed to continue fighting for women like Damini, for the countless women victims of armed conflict, and to continue my engagement for Women, Peace and Security. My country, Liechtenstein, also wishes to contribute to the fullest to the success of this Commission, and we have therefore offered to serve as a member starting 2015. We would be proud to serve on this important Commission and hope that you will support our candidature.

I thank you.

