



PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THIRD COMMITTEE
ITEM 28 (A) AND (B): ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
STATEMENT BY ANTONIA STRACHWITZ, ADVISOR

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr Chairman

This year we are commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women that took up its work in October 1982. Let me commend the Committee for its outstanding work even in a dire resource situation for which the General Assembly bears the primary responsibility. We hope to address this problem in a sustainable way during the upcoming negotiations on Treaty Body strengthening. Since its entry into force, 187 States have ratified CEDAW and it has become one of the most universal among the UN human rights instruments. The invaluable contribution the Convention has made to safeguard the rights of women should weigh heavily on those who have not yet chosen to join the treaty. We hope that they will do so as a matter of priority.

Mr Chairman

Physical violence against women affects every society around the globe. According to recent studies, 2 out of 3 women worldwide experience gender based violence at least once in their lifetime; however, only a small fraction of these incidents, in particular rapes, are reported to the police and of those reported, only few lead to convictions. Most perpetrators simply walk free. We have to ask ourselves why so many women who have become victims of gender based violence refuse to talk about their experiences and prefer to let crimes go unpunished. One

factor that surely contributes to the blatant under-reporting of gender based crimes is that a clear majority of women who report being raped, physically assaulted, and/or stalked have in fact been victimized by a current or former husband, cohabiting partner, boyfriend, or an acquaintance. Having a personal relationship with the offender makes it all the more difficult to testify against him. At the same time, this leads to the creation of a culture of impunity and the systematic lack of accountability will always be conducive to new violence. Therefore, States need to raise awareness, build trust in their national judicial systems, make sure they are effective and accessible and train officials to provide victims with the support they need. It is the primary responsibility of States to ensure that those who violate women's human rights will be held accountable. Liechtenstein has recently undertaken measures to strengthen its legislation on sexual crimes by broadening the list of crimes that trigger automatic prosecution independent of the victim's consent. In addition, the government has run a public campaign to raise awareness of domestic violence. This legislative reform is also intended to ensure that in the future more victims dare to come forward with their cases.

Mr Chairman

Sexual violence also continues to be a predominant problem in situations of armed conflict. Such violence not only constitutes a major infringement on the dignity and physical integrity of the victim but also tears at the fundamental social fabric of the community. To build sustainable peace, sexual violence must therefore be addressed throughout all stages of conflict resolution processes, starting with ceasefire agreements, and the presence of adequate gender expertise at the peace table. When provisions on sexual violence are not part of ceasefire agreements, such violence can be used to, in effect, continue acts of war, thereby undermining efforts to reduce violence and leading to a cycle of vengeance. Moreover, research shows that when sexual violence is not addressed in early stages of mediation efforts, the issue is likely to be ignored throughout later efforts to create and maintain peace. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has significantly advanced international law through its recognition of sexual violence as a war crime and crime against humanity.

Mr Chairman

Besides being a clear violation of women's human rights, gender based violence has also shown a direct impact on development. It hampers productivity, reduces human capital, undermines economic growth and hinders women's full participation in all aspects of society. Around the globe, women continue to face discrimination and exclusion from decision-making processes. As we witness a broad transition to what will hopefully be a new era of democratic and participatory societies, women meet again with societal and legal barriers and exclusion in the very transformation processes that their actions helped initiate. Active at grassroots level, they face discriminatory practices that exclude them when laws are codified and constitutions are written. States must do more to protect the rights of women to participate on equal terms throughout all phases of political transition, to guarantee their right to speak their minds and to assemble freely. Stronger efforts have to be made to actively foster women's participation in decision making at all levels. The UN must place particular emphasis on the inclusion of poor, disabled and otherwise marginalized women in democratic processes. In this regard, we welcome the Secretary General's commitment to the advancement of women and the important work done by UN Women. We continue to strongly support these efforts and reiterate our call on the UN to lead by example when it comes to gender equality.

I thank you.