

65TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FIRST COMMITTEE:

GENERAL DEBATE

STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

NEW YORK, 5 OCTOBER 2010

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr Chairman,

Now more than at any point during the 20 years of my country's membership in the United Nations, the UN disarmament community finds itself faced with a choice. While multilateral disarmament diplomacy has achieved some major successes in recent years, with the Landmine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which entered into force this year, discourse and structures within the United Nations has largely remained unchanged. The choice, therefore is clear: the United Nations disarmament community must either change the way it does business, or risk marginalisation. The success of this year's NPT Review Conference and particularly the adoption of a forward-looking action plan on all three pillars gives us hope.

If we are to avoid slipping over the precipice, we must make sure that build on past successes. In that regard, Liechtenstein would support efforts to follow up on the outcome of the NPT Review Conference. In the same vein, we must also acknowledge and build upon disarmament successes like the Landmine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which, while negotiated outside the UN context, have nevertheless become norm-setting disarmament agreements.

The goal of general and universal disarmament predates the United Nations itself. In order to achieve such a distant end, one must have lofty goals to line the way. That is why Liechtenstein supports, as a long-term goal, a nuclear weapons convention. At the same time, however, we must be realistic: such a convention will not come about tomorrow. Rather, the road to the achievement of such visionary goals is lined with many small, practical measures and will take some time to walk. It is for these reasons that we support the initiative on the de-alerting of nuclear weapons, and the United Nations Register of Conventional arms, as well as similar measures. As far as effective measures in the area of nuclear weapons are concerned, we support the immediate commencement of negotiations on a treaty to ban the production of fissile materials by the

Conference on Disarmament, the most pressing and realistic item on its agenda. We also support on-going efforts to place the trade in weapons in an international legal framework. In this regard, we are pleased to participate in the preparatory process for a conference to elaborate an Arms Trade Treaty, and we reiterate that such a conference must be given the procedural tools to achieve a high-quality treaty.

Mr Chairman,

Liechtenstein believes in a rule-of-law based approach to international relations. While we therefore commend unilateral actions such as the Nuclear Weapons' States unilateral moratoria on nuclear testing, we also recognise that they can never be a substitute for a legal obligation: the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty must be brought into force without delay. We also recognise that the use of weapons of mass destruction would be subject to the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law. In that regard, we do not see how the use of nuclear weapons can be reconciled with international humanitarian law.

It has become clear that the UN's current disarmament machinery is no longer fit for purpose. The failure of the Conference on Disarmament to conduct any substantive negotiations since 1996 borders on the farcical. We feel our principled position against rules of procedure that necessitate consensus decisions confirmed. While it goes without saying that in matters as important as disarmament, consensus must always be sought, we underscore that this must not mean giving a veto to every state. Matters are made worse still by the rigorous application of this rule to even the smallest matter of procedure. Liechtenstein is therefore in favour of a resolution that would encourage the Conference on Disarmament to resume its substantive work by the beginning of the General Assembly's 66th session. Should the CD not meet this deadline, the General Assembly should reconsider the role of the CD and indeed the whole of the UN-based disarmament machinery.

In the same vein, we here in the First Committee must also rethink our work. A significant number of resolutions are presented each year without open consultations, only to be voted on, strictly along bloc lines, and in a strongly ritualised manner. Such resolutions do little to contribute to a dynamic disarmament process, and we call for open consultations wherever possible. We also note the general lack of opportunities for civil-society involvement. More so than in any other facets of the UN's work, NGOs are excluded from disarmament negotiations, even though they have useful expertise and insight to contribute.

Mr Chairman,

As the First Committee begins its work, we are ready to engage. Liechtenstein abolished its armed forces over 140 years ago, and continues to strive for worldwide general and complete disarmament. You may count on our cooperation, and our readiness to work with all member states in order to achieve true progress in this session.

I thank you.