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SECURITY COUNCIL - ARRIA-FORMULA MEETING ON “THE THREAT TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY POSED BY THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS”

STATEMENT BY Ms. MYRIAM OEHRI

FIRST SECRETARY, PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Excellency,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important topic. Despite our past efforts and commitments, small arms and light weapons continue to fuel insecurity, conflict and violence of an unprecedented scale. The immeasurable harm these weapons inflict on civilian life, both inside and outside of armed conflict, confers an enormous responsibility on the international community.

The unrestricted flow of arms continues to be a main driver of conflict and contributes to the worrying trend of ever more protracted armed conflicts, largely at the expense of civilians. States’ obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilian populations in conflict are clear, yet respect for these obligations is eroding. Small arms and light weapons are the number one killer of civilians in conflict and the urbanization of conflict further increases the threat they pose to civilians. While Liechtenstein appreciates improvements in the Council’s language regarding SALW, the Council can do far more to curb their illicit trade. In this respect Liechtenstein notes the legal obligations that States have under the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which provides a minimum standard for legal arms trade, the Firearms Protocol of the Palermo Convention and other relevant instruments.

Excellency,

The Council's assessment of its mandate with regard to small arms and light weapons is limited in one fundamental way – it fails to adequately address the insecurity created by the use of SALW outside of armed conflict. The Secretary-General notes in 'Our Common Agenda' that, shockingly, large-scale conflict kills fewer people than other forms of violence, such as violence from criminal groups and interpersonal violence in the home – contexts in which small arms and light weapons are frequently used. The Council should take on a concept of 'human security' that recognizes the harms caused by SALW wherever they are used. Moreover, women and girls are disproportionately affected by this violence, and SALW thus serve as tools to reinforce patriarchal power disparities. Given these facts, our analyses of and remedies to the suffering caused by small arms and light weapons must be gender-sensitive.

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development has brought a political consensus that the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons has broad negative consequences on sustainable development, the social fabric and the rule of law. As such, strengthening the rule of law and its institutions should be at the core of the international community's response to the eroding effect of the unrestricted flow of small arms and light weapons, in line with SDG 16.4. Achieving this target will contribute positively across the sustainable development goals as a whole, with particularly positive synergies with regard to SDG 5 on gender equality.

I thank you.