

FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

CONSIDERATION OF THE 4TH PERIODIC REPORT OF LIECHTENSTEIN SUBMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 18
OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

BY

THE HEAD OF DELEGATION

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madam Chair, Honorable Members of the Committee

My delegation is pleased to be meeting with your Committee here in Geneva. We welcome the opportunity to discuss with you today the forth periodic report of Liechtenstein under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and are looking forward to a fruitful dialogue. This dialogue is highly valuable since your committee assembles outstanding international expertise in the issues at hand. Let me, at the outset, briefly introduce the members of the Liechtenstein delegation:

- Ms Bernadette Kubik-Risch, Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity
- Ms Helen Goop, Chairperson of the Gender Equality Commission
- Mr Hans Peter Walch, Director of the Immigration and Passport Office
- Mr Jules Hoch, Head of the Criminal Investigation Division of the National Police, Chair of the Commission on the Prevention of Violence and Chair of the Anti-Trafficking Task Force
- Mr Patrick Ritter, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Mission in Geneva (Humanitarian Affairs/Human Rights)
- Ms Karin Lingg, Counsellor at the Office for Foreign Affairs

The Liechtenstein Government has defined human rights as one of the priority areas of its foreign policy. Advocating the promotion and protection of all human rights internationally can only be successful if such efforts are rooted in a firm commitment to uphold highest levels of human rights guarantees at home. For this reason, Liechtenstein attaches great importance to international and regional human rights treaties and their implementation. It also strives to fulfill its reporting requirements under such treaties in a timely and substantive manner – even if this is not easy for a small country with very limited human resources.

At the same time, Liechtenstein is committed to strengthening the system of human rights protection within the framework of the UN. Liechtenstein has undertaken several initiatives on human rights topics in the past, including in the area of treaty body reform, and its Ambassador in New York, Christian Wenaweser, is currently leading the process of the five-year review of the Human Rights Council as co-facilitator. The fight against the discrimination of women on the international level is intrinsically linked to the empowerment of women in conflict and post-conflict situations. When the Security Council adopted the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), it acknowledged the negative impact of armed conflict on women and highlighted their decisive role in conflict prevention and in consolidating peace. As an active member of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, which has proven to be an indispensable tool in shaping the Women, Peace and Security agenda, Liechtenstein actively contributes to efforts to bring the agenda from rhetoric into action. We have thus, among other things, co-financed the “Monthly Action Points” on Women, Peace and Security and supported the production of a handbook on women, peace and security, which was published at the 10th anniversary of resolution 1325 in October of last year.

Liechtenstein has also supported an initiative on the access to fuel and firewood: Access to fuel and firewood as well as their use in humanitarian settings pose a variety of serious risks. Women and girls are often raped and assaulted during the collection of firewood. Cooking over indoor fires releases toxic smoke, causing respiratory infections that kill more people

every year than malaria – especially babies and young children. Furthermore, the collection of firewood exacerbates environmental degradation. Liechtenstein has become a core member of the Humanitarian Working Group of the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, launched in September 2010. Finally, Liechtenstein supports international efforts to end impunity for the most serious crimes under international law - including gender-based crimes. This commitment includes continued political support for the ICC as well as financial contributions for the ICC Trust Fund for Victims which adopts a gender-based perspective across all programming and specifically targets victims of all forms of sexual and gender violence.

Madam Chair

To get back to the national level: Thanks to various new legal foundations adopted in the last years as reported in the past periodic reports the equality of women and men at the legal level in Liechtenstein has almost been completely achieved. However, some action is still needed as regards de facto equality. For this reason, Liechtenstein i.a. continues to promote measures aimed at better reconciling family obligations and employment, as well as enhancing women's participation in political and economic decision-making. Because of the strong linkages between these areas and traditional gender roles, a change of awareness among the population in order to eliminate these gender stereotypes is being actively promoted through Liechtenstein's policy on women. Effecting a change in awareness and perception is a process which takes on over a relatively long period of time, and to which the Government is lending its active support. In the end, however, it is the people who must accept and nurture such a change. Women's organizations in Liechtenstein have already made a considerable contribution in this regard. Thanks to the awareness raising efforts by the authorities, these organizations, which are small and mainly made up of volunteers, have also become more involved in the reporting process under CEDAW as well as under other relevant human rights treaties. In 2009 and 2010 the Liechtenstein NGOs involved in human rights had been invited for a meeting, at which a dialogue on implementation of the recommendations of international human rights bodies and on human rights issues in general took place. Liechtenstein's reporting under CEDAW was an important topic of these dialogues. In addition the Office of Equal Opportunity has informed the Women's organizations, that have joined together into the Liechtenstein Women's Network, at the past regular meetings on the possibilities to contribute to the reporting process and to participate in the NGO meetings in Geneva.

Madam Chair

Less than two months have passed since the responses to the comprehensive list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of the fourth periodic report have been submitted. However, I can provide you with some new and additional information on the implementation of the Convention.

I am very pleased to be able to report to the Committee that this Monday, 17 January, the first status report on the human rights situation in Liechtenstein has been presented to the public. With this report, which so far is only available in German, a long-standing wish for a better data situation in the human rights field has been fulfilled. Liechtenstein is thereby also complying with the recommendations of various expert bodies of the UN and the Council of

Europe, which need differentiated basic data for their evaluation of the human rights situation in Liechtenstein. Succinct and easy to read, the report contains data, information, and explanations in regard to more than 80 human rights topics. It contains various references to women's rights – e.g. information on the representation of women in economy and politics, on education and integration of women into the job market, on the situation of single-parent families, on domestic violence and human trafficking, to mention just a few. These and other key data will strongly assist our Government in analyzing the human rights situation and i.a. women's rights situation in Liechtenstein and in drafting programmes to promote and protect these rights. The report will henceforth be updated every year on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day on 10 December. The report is public and can be accessed on Liechtenstein's official Internet portal www.liechtenstein.li.

Let me further make a few general comments on the status quo of Liechtenstein's national economy:

The global financial and economic crisis has affected Liechtenstein, too, although the negative impact has been less grave than in many other countries. The national economy declined in 2008 by -0.5% of the gross domestic product (GDP). For the first time in the past four years the gross national income (GNI) diminished. For 2008 a decline by -3.1% had to be recorded. First estimations for the development of the GDP in 2009 will be available in February. The average annual unemployment rate fell from 3.2% in 2006 to 2.3% in 2008 and increased again in 2009 reaching a rate of 2.8%. Women as well as men benefit from the low unemployment rate although the unemployment rate of women at 3.3% in 2009 was higher than that of men. Women were thus more strongly affected by unemployment. The socioeconomic situation of the Liechtenstein women as well as of the whole population is very good although there are low income households which receive assistance adapted to their need.

I am able to convey additional information on the new laws and the laws currently undergoing revision that have already been mentioned in the responses to the list of issues and questions:

Parliament considered the revision of Liechtenstein's sexual criminal law in a first reading in November 2010. As part of the revision the topic of ex officio prosecution in cases of domestic violence was considered. In Parliament, the Government's proposals met with a positive response in principle. The second reading is scheduled for spring 2011.

The amendments of various laws for the purpose of implementing Directives 2006/54/EC and 2004/113/EC have been considered by Parliament in a first reading in December 2010. With these amendments the principle of equal treatment between women and men in the access to and supply of goods and services will be implemented. Thereby they extend the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sex from the realm of work to many other relevant areas.

The draft law was uncontested in Parliament, and the individual provisions for the further promotion of the equality of women and men was welcomed by the MPs. Only with regard to three articles did Parliament suggest more precision or further inquiries in view of the second reading. The second reading of the proposal will probably take place in the early summer of this year.

According to the model of the neighboring countries of Switzerland, Austria, and Germany, a new institution, the registered partnership of same sex couples, is being introduced in Liechtenstein. Parliament considered the Report and Application concerning the new law in December 2010 in a first reading. In Parliament, the proposal met with a positive response in principle. The Government is currently preparing a response to the questions raised by Parliament. The second reading of the Partnership Act is expected in spring 2011.

Madam Chair

I hope that our periodic report and the responses to the list of issues and questions have been able to demonstrate that Liechtenstein has an active civil society in the field of women's rights and human rights. The most recent example is the initiation of a discussion on child custody after divorce. Parental custody in Liechtenstein will be reviewed as part of the revision of the General Civil Code in 2011/2012. The women's organizations and one men's organization have submitted proposals for new rules. The organization of the Women's Network as well as the Association for Mediation and the Ombudsman's Office for Children and Young People support an amendment of custody rights according to the "Norwegian model" with regard to primary custody. This request was submitted by the Women's Network to the Ministry of Justice on 7 December 2010. On 16 December 2010, the Association for Men's Issues submitted a petition to Parliament on joint custody. Since its foundation in June 2009, the Association for Men's Issues – as well as the "MannsBilder" group in the preceding years – has advocated the introduction of joint custody as a general rule.

Madam Chair

I would like to thank you for your attention.