

Introductory Statement

Presentation of the Fifth Country Report of the Principality of Liechtenstein under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrim- ination against Women of 18 December 1979

Ambassador Martin Frick

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of the Principality of Liechtenstein

Geneva, 5 July 2018

Madam Chair, distinguished Committee Members.

We are very pleased to meet with the CEDAW Committee today for the fifth time to consider improvements and challenges with regard to the situation of women and girls in Liechtenstein. The constructive dialogue with the Committee on women's rights and gender equality has been very fruitful in the past and consistently enriched our national perspective. We are appreciative of an honest, open and inclusive international dialogue to improve the human rights performance of all states. The presentation of country reports in front of the CEDAW Committee offers one of the highly valuable fora catering for this goal.

We like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for making available to States the simplified reporting procedure. Preparing our report based on a request for specific information has allowed us to work more efficiently. This is of great value to a small state operating with limited human resources. Liechtenstein has been an ardent supporter of the process to strengthen and enhance the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system. The simplified reporting procedure is an effective tool to reduce the workload of states and the Committee and we are supportive of the Committee's decision to reinstate it.

Since our last dialogue with the CEDAW Committee, more than seven years have passed. During these years we have been able to improve the situation of women and girls in Liechtenstein in various areas.

Liechtenstein offers a safe and nurturing environment and high standard of living for its inhabitants, including women and girls. For many years, the Liechtenstein economy has been standing out for its highly progressive employment growth. In 2017, Liechtenstein counted 38 810 employees with a population of 38 111. This means, the number of jobs in our country surpasses the number of inhabitants. Unemployment is the lowest in Europe at 1.9% (in 2017). We have a high level of education, students easily switch between the three different tracks at secondary school and our dual vocational education system ensures very low youth unemployment and easy entry into the labour market. Our social security network is robust and equally accessible to women and men. The crime rate is consistently low and has been declining substantially in the past years. In 2017, there was a decline in crime of 16,5% compared to 2016 and a high detection rate at 70%. These extremely favourable conditions and a high level of social peace set the stage for the realisation of the rights and potential of women and girls in our country.

We have made significant progress in the past two decades in advancing gender equality. De iure, women in Liechtenstein are granted full equality to men. Girls perform better in school and more girls than boys graduate successfully from upper secondary school. The talent of girls in so-called STEM subjects, meaning mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology, is actively promoted by an innovative public-private partnership project.

We have a good balance in representation of women in the Government, where we have had two female ministers out of five since 2009. Half of our missions and embassies abroad are led by women ambassadors and in our diplomatic corps we almost achieved gender parity. Recently vacant leadership positions within the National Administration were filled with women. The Office of Statistics, for example, is now led by a woman. The Office of Justice – a crucially important and large office in terms of number of staff – will soon be headed by a woman. The Data Protection Agency whose mandate will be substantially expanded by the incorporation of the EU General Data Protection Regulation into the EEA Agreement now also has a female director.

Unfortunately, in the latest parliamentary elections, women's representation went down from 24% in the previous legislative period to 12%. This result stands in contrast to the gen-

eral trend of the past years. Both representation of women and the chances of their success in elections have been historically at their highest levels following the national elections of 2005, 2009, and 2013. On the positive side, the election result has led to very active and ongoing discussions about the reasons for this decline and adequate countermeasures. It is clear that more needs to be done to achieve a balanced representation of both genders in political bodies in Liechtenstein. In response to the decline in female representation in our national parliament, the main political parties have publicly expressed their intention to aim for gender parity on their candidate lists for the municipal council elections 2019. In view of the 2019 elections, the Equal Opportunities Unit is portraying women politicians in the main Liechtenstein newspapers to draw attention to female political leaders as role models in order to motivate potential female candidates.

We are aware of the need for sustained efforts to increase the share of women in leadership positions in politics as well as in the economy and to achieve a balanced gender representation as soon as possible. To further this goal, the Government has decided in its 2017-2021 Programme to give high priority to improving the compatibility of family and career. Planned measures in this regard include promoting the expansion of after-school programmes, day care centres and of all-day public schools. The National Administration has been offering part-time employment for many years now and as the first employer set up a childcare facility in 2002.

Overall, the number of day care places has more than tripled since 2000. After-school programmes and facilities providing lunch for school children have also been strongly expanded. The supply now meets the demand among preschool-age children. A Governmental Working Group on Family Policy is currently developing a new funding model for day care centres to eliminate financial disadvantages for low-income parents in need of childcare outside the home. Starting this summer, four out of eleven municipalities will offer expanded standardised school times to allow parents to work 50% without having to pay for extracurricular care. The State subsidises these offers and facilities and continuously improves them with the help of municipalities and the private sector.

A comprehensive survey to identify the needs of families in Liechtenstein was conducted just recently. The survey was sent out to all 3,000 families living in Liechtenstein with children

under the age of 12. Participation was high at 30% and 10% agreed to participate in further interviews. The results of the survey were presented to the public by the incumbent Minister of Social Affairs last May and will serve as a basis for deriving measures tailored to the needs of Liechtenstein families in combining family and career.

Women's and girls' rights have also been strengthened by comprehensive legal reforms. The protection from gender discrimination, for example, has been enhanced by expanding the criminal offence of racial discrimination to also cover - inter alia - the characteristic of "gender". Publicly inciting to hatred and discrimination or refusing a service intended to be provided to the general public on the basis of gender are now a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment of up to two years.

Further, the law governing sexual offences was revised to enhance the legal protection of victims and improve the practical measures against violence against women and children as well as domestic violence. Notably, the catalogue of offences that are prosecuted "ex officio" was expanded to dangerous threats against close family members, stalking, rape or sexual assault in marriages and partnerships. The revision also strengthened victims' rights in criminal proceedings. This fall, our parliament will consider new proposals to amend the Criminal Code to further strengthen the protection of women and girls from physical and sexual violence. This includes new offences such as the intentional luring of an adult or child to another state with the purpose of forcing them into marriage, the tightening of sentences for sexual offences and the expansion of limitation periods.

Additionally, several laws were amended to improve the financial situation of part-time working persons and persons who invest more time in domestic and care work as well as parenting. Disadvantages in the provision of pension insurance were abolished for those who spend more time child-rearing or looking after persons in need of care. The occupational pension provision for low-income and part-time employees was improved and the legal inheritance share of the surviving spouse or registered partner was increased. These reforms are important steps of making domestic and care work as well as parenting more attractive and eliminating disadvantages unfortunately still affecting more women than men.

As another crucial improvement for the promotion of human and thus also women's rights in Liechtenstein, a National Human Rights Institution in line with the Paris Principles was

established. After a broad consultation process with civil society and other stakeholders, the Liechtenstein Parliament decided in November 2016, by consensus, on the new law establishing a National Human Rights Institution. At the same time, Parliament adopted the financial contribution to the institution over the coming three years, amounting to 350,000 Swiss Francs (USD 360,000) per year. The fact that the just recently created institution submitted a Shadow Report to the CEDAW Committee underlines that it stands ready to protect and promote human rights of women and girls in Liechtenstein.

These developments demonstrate that our parliament as well as society at large are committed to improving social justice and advancing equal opportunities for women and girls. The situation of women and girls in Liechtenstein, however, would not be the same without our vibrant civil society. As a result of an accepted UPR recommendation in 2008, we have been conducting yearly human rights dialogues with our civil society since 2009. It has provided women's organisation in our country with an institutionalised opportunity to discuss with national authorities challenging issues such as unpaid care work, compatibility of family and career, parental leave, the pay gap or gender stereotypes. During last year's dialogue, more than 30 representatives of non-governmental organisations, independent institutions and bodies, the private sector and our newly established national human rights institution participated in the dialogue. Additionally, the government has actively facilitated a constructive exchange between Liechtenstein's civil society and high-level representatives of the United Nations and the Council of Europe. At recent visits of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Deputy Secretary-General or the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, the government always arranged for NGOs to meet and discuss with them human rights issues relevant to our country.

These encouraging developments must be reinforced in the future. We know very well that sustained efforts of all actors, including the state, the private sector and civil society, are required to tackle the remaining challenges in achieving de facto gender equality. Areas of focus will have to be improving representation of women in decision-making and leadership positions in politics and the economy as well as continued progress in enabling compatibility of family and career. The Liechtenstein Government is aware of its responsibility in this regard. In February 2018, it adopted and communicated its national implementation strategy for the SDGs. SDG 5 on Gender Equality is among the eight SDGs with highest priority for

implementation, underscoring the Government's commitment to take action in this area. Specifically the Government commits to a more active gender equality policy, signalling at the same time its readiness to provide financial support for specific gender equality projects on the domestic level.

Last but not least, the Government's long-term commitment to women's and girls' rights is also reflected in that it has been a priority of its foreign policy for many years now. Liechtenstein has engaged in extensive international advocacy to protect and promote the rights of women and girls. Further, gender equality represents a transversal topic of the International Humanitarian Cooperation and Development projects we support. All of our projects are gender-sensitive and have a clear intention to improve the situation and the rights of women and girls. Accordingly, our projects aim at legal and factual gender equality, promoting economic and social empowerment of women, improving access to basic education and vocational training for women and fighting sexual and gender based violence.

Before concluding my remarks, I wish to briefly introduce my delegation:

- Mr. Peter Matt, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Principality of Liechtenstein in Geneva;
- Ms. Julia Katharina Walch, Head of the Asylum Division of the Migration and Passport Office;
- Ms. Irene Kranz, Head of the Educational-Psychological Services of the Office of Education;
- Mr. Andreas Schädler, Head of the Crime and Investigation Division of the National Police;
- Ms. Daniela Clavadetscher, Officer of the Projects and Law Division at the Office of Social Services;
- Ms. Nuscha Wiczorek, Diplomat of the Security and Human Rights Division at the Office for Foreign Affairs Office.

My delegation and I are now looking forward to the constructive dialogue with the distinguished members of the CEDAW Committee.