



**Consideration of the fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report of Liechtenstein
by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

Geneva, 27 August 2012

Introductory Statement by Liechtenstein

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Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My delegation is very pleased to be meeting today with your committee here in Geneva. The opportunity to discuss with you the fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report of Liechtenstein under article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination is very welcome for us. This dialogue is highly valuable since your committee assembles outstanding international expertise in the issues at hand. I hope that the comparatively large size and diverse composition of our delegation will contribute to a fruitful and constructive dialogue. First, please allow me to briefly introduce the members of the Liechtenstein delegation:

- Mr. Jules Hoch, Head of the Criminal Investigation Division of the National Police and Chair of the Commission on the Prevention of Violence
- Mr. Frank Haun, Prosecutor
- Mr. Heribert Beck, Head of the Asylum Division of the Immigration and Passport Office
- Mr. René Meier, Integration Officer at the Immigration and Passport Office
- Ms. Eva-Maria Schädler, Office of Education

- Mr. Patrick Ritter, Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein to the United Nations in Geneva
- Mr. Panagiotis Potolidis-Beck, who is with the Office for Foreign Affairs, the office that I am heading as director. My name is Martin Frick.

For many years, the promotion and protection of human rights at the national and international levels has been one of the priorities of the Liechtenstein Government. Liechtenstein attaches great importance to international and regional human rights treaties and their implementation. The strengthening of the system of human rights protection within the framework of the United Nations is of significant importance for Liechtenstein since Treaty Bodies represent an important pillar for the protection of human rights. For this reason, Liechtenstein always strives to fulfil 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. In this context I would also like to mention that Liechtenstein publishes all the periodic reports, concluding observations and recommendations for Liechtenstein concerning international and regional human rights treaties on the website of the Office for Foreign Affairs. On the other hand, our country has also undertaken several international initiatives on human rights topics until today, including in the area of the treaty body reform. And it has actively participated in the activities of the Working Group of the Human Rights Council on complementary standards.

On the national level, Liechtenstein has made a number of significant efforts to improve the promotion and protection of human rights in general. About one decade ago, the Government decided to create the Office for Equal Opportunities. The creation of this office constituted a significant step forward in promoting equal opportunities for all people in Liechtenstein. The office has a concrete mandate regarding the promotion of equal opportunities with respect to gender, migration and integration, people with disabilities and sexual orientation. Recently, the Government decided to carry out several reforms in the field of the public administration. The national framework for the promotion and protection of human rights is also affected by the reform. One of the decisions taken by the government, is to discontinue the Office of Equal Opportunities and to establish a fully independent body for human rights which will have a broad mandate for the promotion and protection of human rights. The mandate of the new body includes elderly people, refugees and asylum, gender equality, children and youth, persons with disabilities, migration and integration as well as sexual orientation. In addition to the mandate of the present Office for Equal Opportunities, the new body will also be in charge of receiving and processing complaints from individuals. The creation of this new body underscores the continued commitment of the Liechtenstein Government to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights at home. Nevertheless, the exact time and the details for the implementation of the planned reform are yet to be decided.

It is also worth to mention, that Liechtenstein communicates transparently with NGOs. For instance, an NGO-dialogue between the Office for Foreign Affairs and national NGOs takes place on a yearly basis. The aim of this dialogue is to inform NGOs about recent developments in the field of human rights and to give them a platform for the exchange of

views. Furthermore, there is only a very limited number of complaints concerning human rights in Liechtenstein. For instance, cases from Liechtenstein are very rarely brought to the European Court of Human Rights which is an indication for the high standard of human rights in Liechtenstein.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me now turn to the fight against any forms of racial discrimination and briefly explain why this is of high importance for Liechtenstein. Liechtenstein is a very small country with only 36'000 inhabitants. The country is highly industrialised and there has been a strong economic need for immigration of foreigners for a long time period. As a result, today over one third of the resident population are foreigners. The genuine integration of foreigners as well as the mutual understanding and the combat of any forms of racism are vital for a peaceful and cohesive society. Genuine integration means that all the inhabitants regardless of their origins can equally participate in the economy, the labour market, education and the social security system. For this purpose, it is also essential that all foreigners are able to speak and understand the official language of our country.

The high importance which is attached by the Government to the integration of the foreign population is underlined by a number of measures taken in recent years. In 2008, the new Foreigners law, based on the principle of "demanding and promoting", was adopted by Parliament and applies to all foreigners coming from countries outside the European Economic Area and Switzerland. It is demanding because it stipulates that foreigners coming to Liechtenstein have to acquire a basic knowledge of the German language within a certain time period if they want to stay in Liechtenstein for a longer time period. For this purpose, they have to sign an integration agreement which defines the specific goals of their integration. On the other hand, the state actively promotes the learning of German by supporting language courses for foreigners financially. To further the integration of the foreign population, the Government in 2008 also decided to create the position of an Integration Officer within the Immigration and Passport Office who is responsible for the active promotion and the implementation of integration measures. At the same time, he is an easily accessible contact person for foreigners for any questions they may have concerning integration matters. In 2010, the Government adopted the new integration concept based on the principle "Liechtenstein - Strength through Diversity" which puts emphasis on the benefits of diversity and multilingualism for the society in Liechtenstein. In addition, it defines a number of measures to be taken from 2011 to 2013. I am very happy that Mr. René Meier, Integration Officer at the Immigration and Passport Office, is in our delegation today and I am sure that he will be able to provide you with further details on integration measures in Liechtenstein during our dialogue.

Another central aspect of integration is the enhanced political participation of foreigners. Integration is not a one way street but a mutual process. Therefore, the participation of foreigners in political processes is required to make their needs and interests heard. Although non-citizens do not have the right to vote in Liechtenstein, there are other possibilities for them to make themselves heard. For instance, in 2011 the Government created the integration conference, which is a platform for dialogue between foreigners associations and the Government. The fact that this conference is convened by the head

of Government reflects the importance attached to it. In this framework, problems and needs of the foreign population can be discussed directly between the Government and foreigners. Experience shows that the foreign population has recently become politically more active. One good example to mention is that after the integration conference in 2012, the umbrella organisation of the foreigners associations in Liechtenstein submitted a proposal for the attention of the Government with over 30 potential measures to improve the integration of foreigners. Another example is a petition which was submitted Parliament by the association of the Swiss in Liechtenstein in 2010. In this petition, the association of the Swiss underlined its interest to participate actively in the political processes in Liechtenstein such as in different committees. It has to be said, that the possibility for foreigners to participate in Committees on the local and national level already exists and there are various examples where this happens in practice. These examples show that there is an active community of foreigners in Liechtenstein and a constructive and respectful dialogue with the state authorities.

Mr. Chairman,

Integration of foreigners is only one part of the activities of the Government to prevent racial discriminations. Another important part consists of activities for the prevention of right-wing extremist violence. Based on the results of the survey on "Right-Wing Extremism in Liechtenstein" carried out by the University of Applied Sciences of North-Western Switzerland in 2008/2009, the Commission on the Prevention of Violence developed a measure catalogue to combat right-wing extremism. The catalogue consists of five specific targets and respective measures for the period from 2010 to 2015. For instance, in 2010 the Commission carried out a awareness-raising campaign for the general public under the title "Facing Right-Wing Extremism Together". Other measures, such as trainings for the administration, police, schools or judges have either already been implemented or are to be implemented in the near future.

Mr. Chairman,

The realisation of integration measures, campaigns and preventive measures against right-wing extremism are indeed very important but not enough. It is equally essential to monitor the factual situation. In Liechtenstein, basically two direct instruments exist to monitor the development of right-wing extremist violence on the one hand and the development of integration on the other hand.

In 2011, the first monitoring report on right-wing extremist violence was published for the year 2010. This report was published by the Liechtenstein-Institute, an independent research institute, on behalf of the Commission on the Prevention of Violence. The aim of the report is to take stock of all incidents of right-wing extremist violence on a yearly basis. While there were reports on a number of incidents in 2010, the report for the year 2011 did not register any incidents of right-wing extremist violence. This is an indication for the effectiveness of the measures taken by the Commission on the Prevention of Violence.

The integration of foreigners into the local society can be followed in the status report on the situation of human rights in Liechtenstein, which is published on a yearly basis since 2011 by the Liechtenstein-Institute on behalf of the Office for Foreign Affairs. The status report analyses various indicators linked to human rights. It covers the dimensions "Population", "Education", "Employment", "Social Situation", "Health", "Persons with Disabilities", "Religion", "Politics", "Justice", "Citizenship, Residence and Asylum" as well as "Integration". In order not to exceed the time for my introductory statement, I will not go too far into details concerning the results of this report. As a general overview, the report shows that foreigners in Liechtenstein are in general well integrated in all sectors of public life. For instance, by the end of 2011, the rate of unemployment among foreigners was only 3.8 percent, which is very low and only slightly higher than the rate of unemployment among Liechtenstein citizens. However, the report also shows, that there is further potential to improve integration in other areas, such as in the school system. The report indicates that foreigners are underrepresented at schools of higher education such as grammar schools and universities. Recently, the Office of Education has started implementing a number of measures to improve the integration of foreigners in the school system and to increase the share of foreigners within schools of higher education.

Mr. Chairman,

I hope that our periodic report and the answers you will receive from our delegation to your questions will be able to demonstrate that Liechtenstein is strongly committed to the combat of any forms of racial discrimination.

I thank you for your attention.