

**50TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
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STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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Madame Chairperson

The promotion of gender equality and women's rights has been one of the priorities of Liechtenstein's participation in the work of the United Nations since its accession to the organization some fifteen years ago. We are therefore pleased to take again part in this anniversary session of the Commission on the Status of Women and to contribute to the debate on the implementation of strategic objectives in critical areas. In fact, it is in support of enhanced implementation of United Nations standards that this Commission has played a catalytic role in the past and provided a unique opportunity to share ideas and best practices to advance women's rights and status worldwide. The reports prepared by the Secretariat constitute again an excellent basis for our deliberations on the priority themes. Given the time constraints of this debate, I will concentrate my intervention on the second theme and make a few remarks on the equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes from a national perspective.

Madame Chairperson

We have noted with satisfaction that the Secretary General's report places much emphasis on decision-making processes at all levels. The inclusion of information on women's participation in local governments reflects the important fact that the percentage of women representatives at the local level is, in a global comparison, still higher than at all other levels. In Liechtenstein we have made the same experience: Currently, women account for 30 per cent of elected representatives in local authorities, compared to 24 per cent in Parliament and 20 per cent in Government. This graduation could, of course, be interpreted as an indication of the importance which is attributed by the electorate to the decision-making processes at the different levels. We think, however, that it mainly reflects the bottom-up approach which has been pursued by the Liechtenstein Government during the last two decades through its various measures aimed at strengthening the basis of women interested in politics and prepared to compete for public office and political functions. Those measures include, *inter alia*, the establishment of a pool, listing as many women as possible who are interested in serving on an advisory committee for the Government, the financing of training courses in media work, presentation techniques, argumentation and public-speaking skills and the development of a checklist for political parties which aims to facilitate the recruitment, development and promotion of female candidates.

Madame Chairperson

The Secretary General's report states that there is evidence that women in local government have a tangible impact on local policy decisions

directed towards services and amenities that benefit women and in building social acceptance of women's political authority. We would like to add that women's participation in decision-making processes at the local level can also provide an excellent opportunity for political parties to promote future candidates in national elections. In fact, in an open-list proportional system as the one in Liechtenstein, where candidates are directly elected, any person running for a political body increases the odds by assuming a public function which is well known to the voters, such as a function at the local level, i.e. the level which is closest to the people. This holds all the more true for female candidates who, unfortunately, are still in a minority and therefore less common. Recent parliamentary elections in Liechtenstein have confirmed that political parties are increasingly aware of this potential.

Madame Chairperson

Publicity of female politicians and decision-makers can also contribute to encouraging other women to run for political functions. Such publicity may be acquired either through direct contact with the electorate or through media attention. Media attention, on its part, tends to increase with the level of decision-making. In this regard, international organizations like the United Nations could play a far more important role. My delegation has, for instance, repeatedly expressed its conviction that the appointment of women as special representatives and envoys of the Secretary-General could play a catalytic role for the stronger involvement of women in peace processes, which would also strengthen the awareness of the need to mainstream gender issues into such processes as in any other political process. The fact that the International Court of Justice is, for the first time ever, presided over by a woman should encourage us and set the example for appointments and elections to other important functions in the United Nations family. The elections to the International Criminal Court have proven that it is possible to create the incentives for States to nominate and elect qualified women for such high office. Currently, 8 out of 18 judges of the ICC are women. This result was facilitated by an innovative election procedure, which increased the likelihood of a gender balanced result through so-called "minimum voting requirements", without however imposing quotas on the outcome of the elections.

Madame Chairperson

It goes without saying that measures to increase the number of women in decision-making processes can only be sustainable if they are accompanied by an enabling and supportive environment. Establishing the necessary conditions which enable women to participate on an equal footing with men in political work and public office, whether paid or

unpaid, requires a sustained commitment of all stakeholders to the promotion of gender equality in all spheres of life, and in particular with regard to family responsibilities. The number of women representatives in political bodies alone does not fully reflect the level of such commitment. It is, however, one indicator for a much broader process of changing attitudes and opportunities towards gender equality. The Commission on the Status of Women will continue to play a crucial role in advancing this process in all member States. We are looking forward to further participating in this work.

I thank you.