



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly, Third Committee: Debate on agenda item 69

Right of peoples to self-determination

New York, 7 November 2007

LIECHTENSTEIN

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Liechtenstein is of the view that the right of peoples to self-determination, if applied in a meaningful and innovative way, has the potential to be an important tool for the promotion and protection of human rights as well as for the prevention of conflict. We have, therefore, been a long-standing supporter of new approaches to this right and have repeatedly advocated a comprehensive discussion of the concept of self-determination.

Innovative approaches are based on the fact that the exercise of the right to self-determination cannot be equated with attaining independence, in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 2625, also known as the Friendly Relations Declaration. Viewed more broadly as entailing various forms of self-administration and self-governance, the right

to self-determination can offer new perspectives on peaceful coexistence falling short of secession and independent statehood. We support the view that the application of this right is not restricted to the context of decolonization or the situation of peoples under foreign occupation, but that it pertains to all peoples as stated in common article 1 of the two Covenants on human rights.

For this reason we are pleased that the recently adopted Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples contains a number of provisions on the issue of self-determination which mark an important new step in the way the United Nations is dealing with the concept of self-determination. By taking into account the self-determination of indigenous peoples, it entails a broadening of the concept regarding situations where the right to self-determination is applicable. In addition, the Declaration introduces the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to internal and local affairs as a way to exercise to right to self-determination and thereby goes beyond the exclusive and too narrow focus on independent statehood. It offers a promising new approach which shows that the right to self-determination could be applied to address the desire of many peoples to give expression to their distinctiveness and to create an environment conducive to their enjoyment of human rights, without resorting to violence and posing a threat to territorial integrity.

In this context, it is essential to keep in mind that, in agreement with a modern interpretation of the right to self-determination, due attention has to be paid to the specific circumstances when it comes to its implementation. The fact that different solutions are considered suitable for different peoples and their specific situations should not be considered a weakness but rather a strength of the broader concept of the right to self-determination, since it allows for tailored and therefore more promising approaches.