**Intersessional Seminar on Youth and Human Rights**

**Video statement by United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet**

12 April 2021

I am pleased to address this important seminar.

Young people have been inspiring the world by standing up for universal rights.

The right to a healthy planet and an inclusive future. The right to live free from discrimination and deprivation. The right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives.

Their activism has been recognized as the theme of this year’s #FightRacism campaign on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

At the same time, young people still face barriers and challenges in the realization of many of their human rights exactly because of their age.

My Office’s report to the Human Rights Council on youth and human rights concluded that young people suffer challenges and discrimination in a number of areas, including participation in politics and public decision making, in the transition from education to employment, access to health services, including to sexual and reproductive healthcare, and conscientious objection to military service, among others.

My report also identified that transition to adulthood was particularly challenging for young people with disabilities, young migrants and refugees, and those in conflict with the law and in conflict situations.

In addition, age often intersects with and multiplies discrimination based on other grounds, preventing many young people from enjoying equal opportunities and substantive equality.

COVID-19 has magnified existing inequalities, with a devastating impact on young people. The Global Survey on Youth and COVID-19 led by the ILO in partnership with my Office, civil society organizations and other partners, found that the impacts of the pandemic on young people are systematic, deep and disproportionate. That is particularly the case among women, younger youth and young people in lower income countries.

My Office supports the UN Youth Strategy and is actively working towards its implementation. Indeed, youth is one of three spotlight populations in our Management Plan, as we aim to intensify the focus on youth across the work of my Office.

To this end, and with the support of Norway, in 2019, my Office deployed a network of youth officers across five field presences and in headquarters, with the aim of developing closer partnerships with young people and youth-led organizations in order to promote human rights with and for youth.

As a result, and in an effort to promote youth participation in our own work, several of our field presences have developed a youth network or youth advisory board to provide input, and co-create the Office’s youth programming.

We look forward to continuing our joint efforts, as well as to work with you to ensure all young people can fully enjoy their human rights.

Thank you.