Statement by

**the UN Youth Delegate of Slovenia**

at the

**Intersessional Seminar on Youth and Human Rights**

*Geneva, 12 April 2021*

Excellencies, fellow delegates,

I would like to thank today's panellists and speakers for their valuable insight into the topic of human rights of youth.

In addressing the challenges and discrimination faced by young people as the Slovenian UN Youth Delegate, I would like to focus on youth participation and active citizenship.

The UN World Programme of Action for Youth outlines full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and decision making. Youth participation is also addressed in the Human Rights Council resolution 41/13 and the Youth and human rights Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/39/33).

It is not news that youth, due to their age, experience discrimination and challenges to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes and therefore active acquisition and realization of their human rights. Especially, young women and girls experience additional challenges due to stereotypes. As the Youth and human rights Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/39/33) finds, a key starting point to overcoming these challenges is citizenship education, which is lagging behind in countries all over the world.

This is why I find it extremely important that the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2020-2024) focuses on youth, with special emphasis on education and training in equality, human rights and non-discrimination as well as inclusion and respect for diversity.

In Slovenia, my colleagues and I are taking steps in this direction. We are preparing to execute a 4-session active citizenship course for high schools, covering topics from an individual’s place in the community, state and the international context, which is modeled after a lesson plan proposal by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Education. We find it crucial for further empowerment of youth, because we cannot demand our human rights, if we do not know them or if we are not empowered to think that our needs, wants, and opinions matter in the societal context.

Additionally, I am proud that Slovenia, as part of the presidency to the Council of the EU, will host an EU Youth Conference this year aiming to implement the EU Youth Goal number 9 (providing youth with safe, accessible and sustainable civic spaces).

Not only in the Slovenian context, but also when speaking to youth about content topics of the Sustainable Development Goals, we identify a similar prerequisite for their achievement - active citizenship, which must begin with critical citizenship and human rights education. This is why I would like to ask today's speakers, where do you see the potential of education to meaningfully engage youth in shaping our future?

I thank you.