**Intersessional Seminar on Youth and Human Rights Monday 12 April 2021**

**3pm – 5pm: Youth mainstreaming in human rights mechanisms and next steps on youth and human rights at the international level**

*Simona Petrů, Youth Delegate of the Czech Republic*

Thank you for the floor, Mr./Madame Chair,

Let me express my gratitude for the opportunity to speak here on the behalf of the Czech youth in my role as the Czech Republic’s UN youth delegate. I would like to use this opportunity to talk about, from my point of view, the most important matter of the future approach towards the issue of youth and human rights. This matter is participation of youth in public and political affairs.

I strongly believe that finding solutions for different youth issues is not possible without including the voices of youth in the discussion. For the future approach towards youth and human rights, continuous strengthening of youth representation at all levels should be a priority since only through the involvement of youth can we ensure that they will never be left behind. This can be achieved through establishing meaningful youth councils with a real influence on different levels, supporting youth-led projects or creating opportunities of both formal and non-formal education of youth.

Similar initiatives which do already exist can serve as an example of good practice that should be extended in the future. However, in recent months, even well-established initiatives have been affected by the world´s pandemic: for example: exchange programmes have been cancelled, non-formal educational models and projects can be realized only in improvised online form, and generally, the opinions of youth have been not regarded as important as the opinions of adults. It is important to emphasize that every crisis affects young people in a specific way, and therefore the youth participation and the voices of youth should be valued and reflected during the pandemic and the recovery period even more.

We, as youth, want to be not just listened to, but also heard.

Thank you for your attention.