**Forum on Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law: role of youth in public decision-making – 21-22 November 2016**

***Sub-theme: Creating an enabling environment for the effective participation of youth in public decision-making***

Chairpersons, Excellencies, Colleagues,

Le Canada se réjouit de la création du Forum sur les droits de la personne, la démocratie et l’état de droit. Nous saluons également la présence de M. Ahmad Alhendawi, le premier Envoyé spécial du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies pour la Jeunesse.

Canada believes that a democratic, inclusive and accountable society needs to enable meaningful youth participation not only because they are tomorrow’s leaders and decision-makers, but because young people have different and innovative skills, networks, and ways of solving problems. They can shed light on new ways to address issues of concern at the local, national and international level. That is why youth are not only the leaders of tomorrow but also the leaders of today.

As this new forum aims to identify and analyze challenges and opportunities for States in their efforts to advance human rights, democracy and the rule of law, Canada firmly believes that the inclusion of youth and their unique perspective regarding these issues is timely and crucial. In that regard, Canada looks forward to receiving the report on the proceedings of the forum and especially the recommendations and good practices outlined by youth over these two days.

Canada is committed to promoting youth rights and to providing opportunities for more young people to become active and to participate meaningfully in democratic processes governing their communities and countries.

In that regard, in Canada, the government established the Prime Minister’s Youth Council in 2016 to hear what young people have to say. The Council will meet multiple times a year to advise the Prime Minister on national issues such as employment, access to education, building stronger communities, climate change and clean growth. It will use innovative tools to engage with young people in their communities to deepen the government’s understanding of the issues of importance to youth.

In Canada, young people have participated and are continuing to participate in several activities including: a youth forum to discuss changes to accessibility legislation; consultations on Canada’s International Assistance Review; the United Nations High Level Week; and the United Nations Youth Delegate Programme.

One initiative, the 4Rs Youth Movement, is engaging young people in dialogue throughout Canada.

Approximately 5,000 Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth will participate in the face-to-face dialogue that highlights the contributions of Indigenous peoples over the last 150 years. The 4Rs Youth Movement will host regional and national discussion gatherings from coast to coast in 2017, engaging young people in authentic relationship building that furthers reconciliation.

The Government of Canada also engages directly with Canada's five National Indigenous Organizations and other groups who have active youth councils to receive advice and leadership on important issues.

Canada was proud to host the One Young World Summit in Ottawa this past September. The Summit gathered young leaders from 196 countries to empower them to make lasting connections to create positive change. These delegates joined world leaders to debate, formulate and share innovative solutions for pressing global issues.

Canada has also committed to helping young Canadians gain valuable work and life experience while providing support for communities across Canada. We are providing up to $105 million over five years and $25 million per year thereafter in support of youth service to communities.

We are also working abroad with development partners to create enabling environments for the effective participation of youth in public decision-making. In Northern Pakistan, for example, Canada is helping to increase the involvement of youth leaders in state and civil society institutions.

In Tanzania, Canada is working to enhance the capacity of aspiring youthto engage in electoral processes and to encourage them to seek party nominations.

In Ukraine, Canada is working to increase participation of young women in political life by providing training based on the values of transparency and responsibility.

In Kenya, Canada is helping implement a civic and voter education program to ensure the voters' register includes previously marginalized groups, such as women and youth.

And in Senegal, Tanzania, Haiti and Colombia, Canada is supporting a project that builds the skills of key actors, including 488 youth participants, to engage in relevant spheres of decision-making by utilizing a participatory human rights education methodology that involves youth in designing and implementing community initiatives.

Many of Canada’s efforts are taking place in fragile states where enabling and empowering youth is critical to alleviating tensions and preventing violent conflict.

As declared by our Prime Minister, no one is ever too young to be a leader. Fresh thinking and renewed vision is essential to responding to today’s global challenges and building more inclusive and accountable societies.

To end, we would like to pose a question to the forum. As you know, this generation of youth are highly connected and engaged. There are many different initiatives and approaches in many countries. How do we enable young people to share with governments the best ways to involve them in our democratic institutions?