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**Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law**

**Item 1: Creating an enabling environment for the effective participation of youth in public decision-making**

**Statement by Finland's Youth Delegate**

Mr. Moderator,

My name is Sonja Huttunen and I am pleased to participate in these discussions as a youth delegate of Finland. I wish to thank the panelists for their presentations.

The right to education and the right to participate in society are fundamental to the fulfilment of all human rights. Education is the passage to active global citizenship and participation provides avenues for further learning.

Inadequate access to quality education has a detrimental impact on young women’s right to civic and economic participation. When creating an environment that enables young people’s right to participate in public decision-making, education is at the heart of these efforts.

Educating a girl is said to be the world’s best investment. Policies have successfully focused on girls’ equal access to primary education. However, same results have not been achieved regarding equal access to secondary, upper secondary schools or vocational training, let alone higher education. Access to quality education on all levels will foster young women’s path to participation. Education is also proven to decrease multiple barriers in girls’ and young women’s lives that prevent them from participating.

Girls and young women can bring fresh views and perspectives to public decision-making. This contributes towards more sustainable decisions and benefits the entire society. It is also important that youth can meaningfully participate in peace and security matters. Therefore I call for investment in girls and young women by prioritising sustainable development goals 4 and 5 and empowering girls and young women through inclusive and quality education.

And then a question to the panelists: What are the most critical steps that need to be taken at the country level to realize these goals?

Thank you.