**UN Human Rights Council - Intersessional Seminar on Youth and Human Rights**

**12 April 2021**

**Natascha Skjaldgaard - Advisory Council on Youth**

Thank you.

Dear Excellencies, dear all,

My name is Natascha Skjaldgaard and I am here on behalf of the Advisory Council on Youth in the Council of Europe. The Advisory Council consists of 30 youth representatives from all over Europe, and we work together with representatives of 47 member states in the Joint Council on Youth. The Joint Council is the supreme decision and policy-making body of the Council of Europe when it comes to youth.

A key priority for the Advisory Council is young people’s access to human rights. Young people are entitled to enjoy full human rights and all other rights under national and international law. However, young people across Europe and the world are increasingly experiencing challenges in accessing these rights, not least because we are particularly affected by economic, social, political and environmental problems. Simply put, from our perspective youth rights are essential in building a culture based on the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

One way to mainstream youth is to ensure our meaningful and active participation in decision-making mechanisms. Allow me to present a best practice from our side, which is the co-management structure.

Co-management at its core means that each party has an equal say. In practice this means that my opinion as a youth representative weighs just as heavily as that of a member state representative when we make decisions and develop policy, which is essential when it comes to human rights. When it comes to institutional decision-making this is a living example of participatory democracy, and it’s a ground-breaking approach. It ensures that young people not only have a seat at the table, but that we’re actually part of shaping programmes, policies and priorities of the European continent’s leading human rights institution.

Thank you.