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**Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**Intersessional Seminar on Youth and Human Rights**

**Session on ‘Youth mainstreaming in human rights mechanisms and**

**next steps on youth and human rights at the international level’**

**12 April 2021**

Statement delivered by

Maria Luisa Silva

Director, UNDP Office in Geneva

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Young people embody the best of our aspirations: they are bold at bringing to the forefront the major issues that affect all of us, even while remaining largely discriminated and excluded from decision-making in development, peace, and human rights processes.

Agenda 2030 for SD and other normative frameworks recognize young people as ‘critical agents of change’. To realize this promise we should collectively prioritize:

* + a deeper understanding of the barriers and challenges young people face, including those related to closing civic spaces and lack of trust;
  + concrete actions to enhance youth participation in decision-making processes and human rights mechanisms; and,
  + the recognition of the rights of future generations, as we are faced with an unprecedented environmental crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the United Nations Development Programme, we are fully committed to strengthening youth agency and leadership. We:

* + promote inclusive and safe spaces for youth;
  + facilitate youth leadership programmes; and,
  + partner with young peacebuilders and human rights and environmental defenders.

For example,

* + the UNDP ‘16x16’ global initiative recognizes and supports the positive role that young people play in advancing SDG 16 on peaceful, just and inclusive societies;

* + In Ukraine, UNDP supports human rights education, youth civic engagement, capacity development and dialogue platforms for youth organizations, civil servants, students, and teachers.

In closing let me acknowledge and thank young people for the critical roles they play in building a better world.

Thank you.