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Statement by

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at the High Level Segment of the
43rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Geneva
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[Madam President],
[Madam High Commissioner],
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Seventy-five years ago, the peoples of the United Nations stood together to “reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.” The condition of the world compels us to do so again today and every day – or risk the disintegration of our society.

Slovenia remains committed to a rule-based international order, full respect for human rights, and effective multilateralism.

We believe that the contribution of the UN Human Rights Council, the key global forum for the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, is essential to this end. We also remain a staunch supporter of the High Commissioner’s mandate and her independence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Slovenia sees environmental degradation as one of the key contemporary challenges to the full enjoyment and respect of human rights. Hence, my country, together with other members of the core group on human rights and the environment, has recently launched an informal process aimed at recognizing the right to a healthy environment.

With over 150 countries from across the globe having this right enshrined in their legislation and with the global public demands for action, Slovenia believes the moment to act is now. It is high time to recognize the right to a healthy environment, strengthen environmental laws and policies, increase accountability, protect the most vulnerable, alleviate environmental injustices, and facilitate greater public participation. I hope that you will join us in this pursuit.

In addition to the swift degradation of the natural environment, the considerable changes in the digital environment as well as the rapid development of artificial intelligence present potential risks to the human rights of people worldwide. I would like to inform you that, under the auspices of UNESCO, Slovenia will host the International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence. Among others, the Centre will focus on legal, ethical and social implications of artificial intelligence, based on an inclusive, human centred and human rights-based programme of activities.

By adopting the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years ago and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security 20 years ago, the foundation was set to fully seize the potential of half the world's population. If we disregard or even deliberately ignore the rights, knowledge, capabilities, skills, and power of women and girls worldwide, sustainable peace and development will never be achieved. We must therefore ensure that all women and girls fully enjoy all human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights. In this regard, let me assure you that Slovenia will continue to contribute to the empowerment of women and girls both nationally and internationally.

Madam President,

Allow me to briefly touch upon other thematic priorities Slovenia is going to pursue within the Council and in other human rights fora in 2020.

During this session of the Council, together with Austria and Mexico, Slovenia will table a resolution on the rights of persons belonging to minorities. Following up on the 12th Forum on Minority Issues, the resolution will focus on education, language and human rights of minorities. In order to achieve social inclusion and equality for all, full respect of the rights of persons belonging to minorities is indispensable.

Based on current demographic trends, Slovenia will continue to call for a comprehensive human rights framework for older persons, considering that their rights are not adequately protected. Research shows that inequalities in education, health, employment, well-being, inclusion, and income increase with age.

Slovenia will also continue to promote the rights of the child. By enabling children to grow up in secure, healthy, inclusive, and tolerant environments, where they can develop their full potential, we invest in the future of us all. Young people have a crucial role in implementing human rights, peace, and sustainable development.

Furthermore, we consider human rights education and training as indispensable for a just and peaceful society. Through human rights education, we can act preventively against discrimination, intolerance, and violence.

Over the years, the Human Rights Council has proven that it can respond swiftly also to pressing human rights situations around the globe. Its action has undoubtedly contributed to increasing the understanding that

addressing human rights violations can contribute to sustaining peace and security. One should not forget the lessons of history – gross human rights violations may lead to atrocity crimes and spark conflicts and crises. When crisis looms, we have the responsibility to act and react.

Multilateralism can be effective only if we are able to work together and avoid excessive politicization. This can be ensured by upholding our commitment to the HRC's mechanisms, such as the Universal Periodic Review and its Special Procedures. We call on all States to fully cooperate with the Council's mechanisms.

Slovenia was pleased to report on its fulfilment of human rights under the UPR last November. We will present the Government's response to recommendations later in this session.

In the context of human rights promotion, allow me to use this opportunity and stress the important contribution of the civil society, including human rights defenders. Slovenia strongly condemns any attack or act of retaliation against them.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the past few years, important steps have been taken to ensure increased efficiency and effectiveness of the Council. Believing that the current UN financial situation should not affect this body disproportionately, we continue to support increased allocation of funding to the UN human rights pillar.

By way of conclusion, I would like to reiterate my country's commitment to the Human Rights Council and to the promotion and protection of human rights. It is for this reason that Slovenia has announced its candidature for membership of the Council for the period 2026–2028. I trust that our activities in the Council and on human rights in general have demonstrated that Slovenia is worthy of membership; I hope that we can count on your support.

Thank you.