



Statements by Simona Petrů and Kristina Šůsová

Czech UN Youth Delegates

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consecutively in order of delivered statements

Challenges and discrimination faced by young people in the realization of their rights,
Kristina Šůsová

Thank you for the floor, Mr/Ms Chair.

I am very honored to speak here today on behalf of Czech youth in my role as the Czech Republic's UN youth delegate. I would like to highlight two of the key challenges that young people face now in these difficult times of global pandemic.

I and all my fellow students have spent the past year isolated in our old children rooms secluded from our friends and colleagues, and detached from the stimulating academic environment. Even though we understand the reasoning behind the school closings, in many places, the universities have been first to close. The decision-makers often overlook the students' need to have a quiet study space which is a wishful thinking rather than a reality in many households. It is challenging to concentrate on your studies when your younger sister has her saxophone practice and the neighbor decides to cut his lawn at the same time.

I am fully aware of the epidemiological situation that led to the closing of universities, however, I strongly believe that the mental health toll that this more than a year-long closing of universities has on young people should be considered as well. Although we might have been protected from the COVID-19 infection (to some extent), according to Young Minds' survey conducted in January 2021, 67% of young people believe that the pandemic will have a long-term negative effect on their mental



health. How do we want to fulfil Sustainable Development Goals when a whole generation of young people is struggling to continue their lives?

We have the right to education and we have the right to health. Our education and our mental health should never be treated as a 'nice to have' luxury. It must be treated as an utmost priority. Hence, I am highlighting two first steps that the governments must take up in cooperation with experts and students. Firstly, a clearer information campaign on how and when the universities will finally open is needed to give us hope that this situation will truly end one day. Secondly, free and easily accessible mental health support at all universities is crucial to sustain students' motivation. Only then can we carry on and work for a better future.

Thank you for your attention!

Youth mainstreaming in human rights mechanisms and next steps on youth and human rights at the international level,

Simona Petrů

Thank you for the floor, Mr./Madame Chair.

Let me express my gratitude for the opportunity to speak here on the behalf of the Czech youth in my role as the Czech Republic's UN youth delegate.

I would like to use this opportunity to talk about, from my point of view, the most important matter of the future approach towards the issue of youth and human rights. This matter is participation of youth in public and political affairs.

I strongly believe that finding solutions for different youth issues is not possible without including the voices of youth in the discussion. For the future approach towards youth and human rights, continuous strengthening of youth representation at all levels should be a priority since only through the involvement of youth can we ensure that they will never be left behind. This can be achieved through establishing meaningful youth councils with a real influence on different levels, supporting youth-led projects or creating opportunities of both formal and non-formal education of youth.

Similar initiatives which do already exist can serve as an example of good practice that should be extended in the future. However, in recent months, even well-established initiatives have been affected by the world's pandemic: for example, exchange programmes have been cancelled, non-formal educational models and projects can be realized only in improvised online form, and generally,



the opinions of youth have been not regarded as important as the opinions of adults. It is important to emphasize that every crisis affects young people in a specific way, and therefore the youth participation and the voices of youth should be valued and reflected during the pandemic and the recovery period even more.

We, as youth, want to be not just listened to, but also heard.

Thank you for your attention.