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54th HRC Session
Biennial panel discussion on youth and human rights
Speaker: Rubina Cantele

Oral statement submitted by
IIMA – Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice

And co-signed by
VIDES International – International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development

Caritas Internationalis

Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul

Edmund Rice International

European Youth Forum

Office International de l'Enseignement Catholique (OIEC)

VIVAT International

With the support of
VIDES Switzerland

Concerning

***Young people's engagement with climate change
and global environmental decision-making processes***
Biennial panel discussion on youth and human rights

IIMA, on behalf of this NGO coalition, welcomes this biennial panel on young people's engagement with climate change and global environmental decision-making processes.

Young people have been at the forefront of the recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

However, youth continue to face multiple barriers to the effective, active and meaningful exercise of their right to participate in decision-making processes.

Firstly, youth formal participation *versus* substantial, **transformative participation remains critical**. Even when youth formal participation is ensured, **its influence in the decision-making**

processes, is very limited. This generates **distrust in political institutions and local authorities and diminishes motivation and engagement among youth.** It is not sufficient to create formal or informal spaces for youth to express their views. Youth participation can constructively change the existing *status quo* only if youth's views are taken into account when decisions are made.

Moreover, only a relatively small portion of young people is reached. **Those youth who are not affiliated with any political party or other organization are almost automatically excluded.**

Secondly, to adequately address these challenges and unlock youth potential as human rights advocates, there is a need for **systematic and effective mainstreaming of youth rights at the national, regional and international levels.**

How can we adopt adequate measures for meaningful youth engagement, if we do not know youth reality on the ground? How can we ask them to commit, if youth-related issues are often kept out of the country's human rights reviews?

This coalition calls on the Member States to:

- **Ensure effective and transformative participation of youth in decision-making processes.**
- **Systematic mainstream youth rights through existing UN Human Rights mechanisms, especially the UPR and the Treaty Bodies.**
- **Establish a mandate for a Special Procedure on youth rights.**

Thank you.