



**Statement by H. E. Mr. Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the UN
General Debate of the Third Committee of the General Assembly**

Thank you, Mister Chair,

Slovakia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. Allow me to offer additional remarks in my national capacity.

We are in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis but we should not allow it to become a **crisis of human rights**. It is even more important as we mark 75 years of the UN, the organization build on the key value and guiding principle of promotion and protection of human rights. We welcome and fully support the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights.

As the pandemic evolved and lockdowns were put in place, rates of **domestic violence** were escalating, bringing enormous suffering to mostly women and children. As we continue to face the crisis and prepare for the second wave of the pandemic or try to mitigate its effects in some countries, we must do better in our response to domestic violence and protect those vulnerable amongst us.

Children are not only suffering as victims of domestic violence but the pandemic, followed by restrictions, prevents them from education, social contacts, physical activities and causes other socio-economic impacts that may affect them for life. As we may not have a second chance to repair these harmful effects, we must act now and invest in our youngest generation.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 is not the only crisis happening right now. We are deeply concerned by the human-rights situation in **Belarus**, and we condemn the unacceptable violence against peaceful protesters, media representatives and representatives of civil society and opposition. Inclusive dialogue, free and fair elections, together with re-establishment of democracy and rule of law are the only feasible way forward for Belarus.

Mister Chair,

as we strive for promotion and protection of human rights, there remains a lot to be done, in many countries worldwide, as well as in many spheres of day-to-day lives. Gender inequalities are still deeply-rooted in every society and no country in the world is currently on target to achieve **gender equality** by 2030. We have to tackle the critical challenges and address the structural causes of gender inequality. If for nothing else, then simply because we cannot leave more than half of the world's population behind.

Thank you.