

**Statement by Slovenia**

**on behalf of the Quadrilateral Group (Austria, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Switzerland)**

**at the**

**51st Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council**

**Annual discussion on integration of a gender perspective**

***Theme: Overcoming gender-based barriers to freedom of opinion and expression***

***Geneva, 26 September 2022***

Thank you, Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, and my own country, Slovenia.

We thank the panelists for their valuable input in today’s discussion.

In her [report](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/212/16/PDF/N2121216.pdf?OpenElement) on gender justice and freedom of expression, Special Rapporteur Irene Khan urges us to respond to not just one, but multiple gender divides, gaps and barriers. Respect, protection and promotion of the right to freedom of opinion and expression is a powerful tool to confront any form of gender-based discrimination. It lies at the heart of the international legal framework on political and civil rights. Technological advancement and digitalization have provided new opportunities to exercise one’s right to freedom of opinion and expression, yet they have also produced a fertile ground to spread fear, intimidation, harassment, stereotypes as well as gender-based discrimination and violence. It is of outmost importance to transform the atmosphere of fear into a climate of opportunities for expression.

Freedom of opinion and expression unfortunately remains a distant goal for most women and girls. Yet, the effective exercise of the right of freedom of opinion and expression is essential for the enjoyment of other human rights and constitutes a fundamental pillar for democracy. We need to invest more to ensure that girls and young women can openly form their opinions in all spheres of public domain, including within this Council and other UN fora. We welcome the establishment of the new UN Youth Office, which will be an important partner in this endeavor.

Mr. President, dear distinguished panelists,

girls and young women around the world play crucial roles as human rights defenders and are as such invaluable to our work. You can count on our support to make sure that the voices of women and girls are better heard.

I thank you.