**Intersessional Panel Discussion on Challenges and Good Practices in the Prevention of Corruption, and the Impact of Corruption on the Enjoyment of Human Rights in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**15 February 2022, 11:00-13:00**

**Statement by Lithuania**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Lithuania would like to thank the OHCHR for organizing this important discussion.

There is no doubt about the close link between corruption and enjoyment of human rights. Corruption presents a great obstacle to achieve a functioning rule of law, weakens accountability structures and obstructs progress on sustainable development. Vulnerable individuals, including women, children, and people with disabilities, may suffer even more as they are more reliant on public goods and essential services.

The fight against corruption is a priority for Lithuania both at home and abroad. In the past decades, Lithuania has achieved significant progress in this area and is constantly revising its anti-corruption legal environment and practices. For example, Lithuania has just revised its Law on Corruption Prevention and national anti-corruption system and is ready to share its experience and innovation.

Functioning domestic institutional framework, dedicated to fight corruption, and the corruption-intolerant society are among key elements in achieving corruption-free democracies. Human rights education, awareness-raising campaigns, and access to information are also important enablers in this regard.

In addition, creating a safe and enabling environment for civil society, human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, and anti-corruption activists is of a crucial importance. We are particularly concerned that those, who fight and expose corruption worldwide, are facing severe danger, increasingly so during the pandemic. This is unacceptable.

In this context, I would like to ask the panelists – what the international community could do in order to ensure adequate level of protection to the anti-corruption human rights defenders and activists, and accountability for the crimes against them?

I thank you.