**Intersessional Meeting of the Human Rights Council**

***Building back better: Integrating human rights in sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic***

***Geneva, 14 January 2021***

UN Women Liaison Office in Geneva

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Thank you, Mr. President.

COVID-19 has intensified and magnified inequalities within and between countries. The pandemic is having a particularly devastating effect on the poorest and most marginalized in society, including women and girls.

Women and girls confronted challenges and exclusion even before the pandemic, though COVID-19 has both exposed and compounded gender-based discrimination. Many women working in the informal sector have been thrown into financial insecurity, without regular income or effective social safety nets. Quarantines, school closures and other movement restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19 have also contributed to the sharp increase in the rates of gender-based violence and the disruption of social and protective networks.

The pandemic has reversed progress on gender equality and women’s rights. Without a concerted response, we risk losing decades of limited and fragile gains. UN Women calls upon governments to ‘build back better’, to transform economies and create more equitable societies that allow everyone to enjoy the full range of their human rights, without discrimination. Bold action is also needed to implement gender-responsive economic policies and to ensure women’s full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership in decision-making processes when building back better.

UN Women looks forward to supporting States to take concrete action to put women and girls at the centre of all efforts to tackle and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I thank you.