

Ladies and gentleman, distinguished guests,

It is my great honour to represent the Czech non-profit sector here on this occasion. I strongly appreciate and truly value the long-standing cooperation between the government of the Czech Republic and us – the NGOs.

Pic1) And it is all about the cooperation which remains the crosscutting element towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. At first glance, these 17 targets may seem like a colourful list of various objectives. However, when you look closer, you will find that they are all intertwined and together they reflect a comprehensive picture of our society. It is important because of their complexity that we cooperate - across social sectors, across fields, from the global to the local level.

Pic2) Such an integrated approach has become the central motto of the “**Měj se k světu**” initiative – a platform that for the first time ever has brought together ecological, social, educational, gender, human rights or anti-corruption-related non-governmental partners in the Czech Republic. More than 125 of these NGOs came together in the autumn of 2015 to present their vision of the Czech Republic in 2030.

It is a vision of a society where people trust each other, think critically but are also open to different opinions. A society that isn't afraid of change and innovation, in which the economy isn't only about making a profit but which relies on sustainability. A society where all decisions are made with due regard to tomorrow and our responsibility for the world we live in. Although each of the organisations involved deal with their own concrete tasks, we outlined together the future where we believe the Czech society shall be heading to. Our priorities have, thanks to the participatory approach of the Czech government, been reflected in the national strategy The Czech Republic 2030.

The biggest challenge – the global implementation of the Agenda 2030 – is still ahead of us, together with many fundamental questions that concern not only its implementation but also how to get it closer to the public and how to get the broadest support for it.

Pic3) Even though we face common challenges, many of them will manifest themselves differently at the local level – take, for example, demographic change. The global North faces an ageing population; on the other hand, many countries of the global South still deal with high population growth. I am delighted that the Czech Republic does her best to face those global challenges while considering the local context through inviting different actors to cooperate and setting specific commitments to fulfil by 2030.

For example, my initiative, the *Beauty of Help Foundation* helps the elderly, raises awareness about the ageing population and is constantly looking for ways to prepare for it. By 2050, one-third of the population in the Czech Republic will be over 65 years old. The economic, political and social consequences for society will be immense. We have to realise that to successfully enforce real systematic change we need the cooperation of both the government and the business sector. We simply need to work together. That is why we, firstly, cooperate with other NGOs that help the elderly, secondly, work with the state administration in finding legislative solutions and lastly we communicate with the private sector in order to search for common ground in the question of age management and employing pensioners. We also organize awareness raising campaigns to increase public understanding.

I believe that through the cooperation, we will succeed not only in meeting the demographic challenges, but also in fulfilling all the other commitments we have set. It's not gonna be easy, but we can make it together.

Thank you very much for your attention.