



Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy

1. Background to the Concept

The Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy provides an underlying framework for the pursuit of the Czech Republic's foreign-policy interests. This document is a follow-up to the previous foreign-policy concept from 2011 and is based both on the Czech Government's policy statement from February 2014 and an in-depth audit of foreign policy carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during 2014. It also takes into account how the international environment has changed since 2011.

2. Global Context

Current global policy is distinguished by several trends that also play a decisive role in how the Czech Republic engages with the world and that the Czech Republic therefore needs to consider in the formulation of its foreign policy.

The first factor is the **change in global power relations** and the shift towards a **multipolar** world order. This is reflected on an economic, strategic-policy and demographic level. The economic growth of emerging economies, especially in East, South-eastern and South Asia, has bolstered the global South's claims to rule-setting regarding the global economy and international trade. Technological progress has expanded the military capabilities of many countries and made them more assertive with the ambition towards defining spheres of influence with fundamental strategic implications. Countries' growing ambitions are also stoking competition for scarce resources, such as minerals, sources of energy and water, while the swelling population in the global South is intensifying the risk of further environmental deterioration. On the other hand, there are a growing number of states who, being unable to perform their basic tasks, descend into the destructive turmoil which becomes a breeding ground for global terrorist threats, organised crime, humanitarian crises and spates of migration. These factors also increase the risk that the current world order, based on multilateralism and international law, will be undermined. In order to keep it afloat and strengthen it further, efforts are needed to ensure that as many countries as possible subscribe to its principles and are involved in its rule-making.

Aside from states, as the traditional stakeholders in international relations, **non-state actors are also wielding increasing influence**. Some



stakeholders, such as non-governmental organisations and transnational corporations, can provide added value to the global order and should be brought on board when decisions are being made on matters of public interest, although their adequate regulation also needs to be ensured. Other actors, such as terrorist organisations and organised crime networks, are intent on perverting or spurning the current world order, and therefore the focus must be on marginalising them or stamping them out.

The existing international order is also epitomised by a high level of interdependence, increasing the likelihood that local incidents will have global repercussions, whether negative or positive, and clouding the predictability of future developments. This interdependence makes international cooperation and a holistic approach all the more essential. Again, multilateralism is the most efficient way of responding to complex global problems.

3. Backdrop to Czech Foreign Policy

The Czech Republic's foreign policy **bridges the domestic and international landscape**. It enables the state and non-state entities alike to operate across borders so that they can contribute to the promotion of the interests of the Czech Republic and the international community – represented, in particular, by the United Nations (UN) – while stifling any activity that could prejudice those interests. It transposes positive impulses from abroad that can be instrumental in the pursuit of Czech public interests domestically. Conversely, on a national, European and global level, it counters threats originating abroad. Foreign policy is also geared towards consolidating the coherence of national policies with the Czech Republic's international commitments. In addition to constitutional and central government bodies, contributions to the attainment of foreign-policy objectives may also be made by non-state actors, including local government bodies, civil society organisations, representatives of the business community, academic and research institutions, churches and religious societies, and others.

The Czech Republic is a **small country in a global context and a medium-sized country on a European scale**. With human resources and funding limited, the number of priorities, by territory and content, has to be identified carefully. These constraints also provide an incentive for active involvement in the **European Union (EU), NATO, the UN, the OSCE and other multilateral structures**, which not only expand the opportunities for the state's foreign-policy activities, but also contribute to national security and prosperity, as well as to the preservation of the liberal-democratic constitutional architecture. The **European Union** provides an underlying framework for Czech foreign policy to be put into effect. The way in which the Czech Republic



engages in EU structures and policies is defined primarily by the Concept of the Czech Republic's Policy in the EU. It is in the Czech Republic's interest to have a uniform, strategically run EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The Czech Republic will actively help to shape the CFSP in cooperation with like-minded EU Member States. Membership in the **United Nations** provides the Czech Republic with a universal platform for its multilateral activities. The Czech Republic has long championed reform efforts to make the way the UN operates more efficient. This includes the reform of Security Council membership. Compliance with **international law** is another inherent basis of Czech foreign policy.

The Czech Republic is situated in **Central Europe**, a region which, after being for centuries an object of great powers' competition, is now integrated into the European Union and, for the most part, into NATO. The Czech Republic is enjoying its warmest ever relations with its neighbours, distinguished, among other things, by a high degree of cohesion between state and non-state actors. It is in our intrinsic interest to maintain and steadfastly cultivate sound neighbourly relations.

The Czech Republic, with its **open economy**, ranks among the world's 40 wealthiest countries. The export to gross domestic product ratio is approximately 80%, with the bulk of exports headed for the European Union. In this light, global needs and trends, and especially external demand for Czech goods and services, have a significant impact on the country's prosperity. The Czech Republic aspires to an open and predictable international economic order based on clear and fair rules.

The starting point for the values espoused by the Czech foreign policy is represented by our pertinence to the Euro-Atlantic area, underscored institutionally above all by our membership in the EU and NATO. The values underlying Czech foreign policy are entirely consistent with the principles and objectives promoted by the EU in its external relations: democracy, rule of law, universality, indivisibility of human rights, respect for human dignity, equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. Specifically, Czech foreign policy is based on the legacy of Czech humanist philosophy, especially that of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, on the legacy of the current of democratisation spearheaded by the Prague Spring and Charter 77, and on the tradition of promoting human rights as a prerequisite for a dignified existence.



4. Czech Foreign Policy Objectives and Instruments

Czech foreign policy aspires to **security, prosperity and sustainable development, human dignity, including the protection of human rights, serving the people, and nurturing a good reputation abroad.** From the Czech Republic's perspective, these objectives are not isolated but mutually interlinked and conditional.

4.1. Security

Foreign policy contributes to the Czech Republic's security, which comprises ensuring the safety of the Czech Republic's inhabitants and the protection of their lives, health, freedom, human dignity and property, as well as ensuring the safety and functionality of government institutions.

The Czech Republic's foreign policy actively espouses the safeguarding and defence of existential national interests, i.e. ensuring the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the country, and the preservation of all aspects of the democratic rule of law, including the guarantee and protection of the population's fundamental human rights and freedoms. It also actively works towards asserting the Czech Republic's strategic and other significant interests, especially the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area, as well as the strengthening of the cohesion and efficiency of NATO and the EU. It helps to prevent and defuse local and regional conflicts, deliver functioning and transparent arms control systems, including the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, safeguard energy, resource and food security, tackle illegal migration, curtail radicalisation and combat international terrorism and organised crime. The framework of ensuring country's security is determined primarily by the Czech Republic's Security Strategy.

The chances of a massive military assault against the territory of the Czech Republic are low. Nevertheless, on the whole, security and stability in Europe's border areas and in regions adjacent to Europe are waning. In this respect, a direct threat to the territory of our allies posing by extension a threat to the Czech Republic is not entirely inconceivable inasmuch as our security is indivisible within the framework of the North Atlantic Alliance.

The **prevention and suppression of security threats** serves as a general means of ensuring the Czech Republic's security. In the pursuit of this aim, the Czech Republic harnesses EU and NATO instruments, as well as those of other international organisations, especially the UN and the OSCE, as well as bilateral



cooperation. The Czech Republic recognises that, if it is to forestall threats, it must strive above all to understand the causes underpinning them. With this in mind, foreign policy is tasked with working through the Czech Republic's network of missions, in conjunction with the national intelligence setup, to assess developments abroad, gather information on the source of security threats, and contribute to a comprehensive analysis thereof and to proposals on how to deal with the ensuing problems.

The primary tool for safeguarding the Czech Republic's security and defence is **NATO's collective defence** system, relying on the mutual defence commitment, a strong Transatlantic bond, a requisite contribution by each member to the defence of the organisation as a whole, and mutual solidarity. The Czech Republic has undertaken to increase defence spending to 1.4% of GDP by 2020, and will make efforts to bring defence spending closer to 2% of GDP should the long-term sustainability of public finances allow so. The Czech Republic will also continue to enhance its military capabilities in line with the North Atlantic Alliance's defence planning, as well as within the framework of the European Union. It will work towards raising the level of interoperability between Czech armed forces and the forces of the country's NATO and EU allies, and towards strengthening complementarity of NATO and the EU in safeguarding of defence and security. These efforts include attempts for greater responsibility to be assumed by European allies for their own security. The Czech Republic will also support NATO's open door policy towards those states which show an interest in membership and meet the necessary conditions.

The means used to safeguard the Czech Republic's strategic and other significant security interests depend on the specific nature of those interests. Active involvement in **peacekeeping and crisis management missions beyond our borders** is instrumental in coping with local and regional conflicts and mitigating the effects thereof. These missions are undertaken above all within the framework of NATO, the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the OSCE, the UN, and multinational coalitions, and they take place in compliance with the constitutional requirements of the Czech legal system and international law. Participation in these missions must be justified by the foreign-policy and security interests of the Czech Republic and its allies and correspond to the Czech Republic's capacities and capabilities.

The frontline security interests of the Czech Republic and its allies include Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans, North Africa, the greater Middle East and Sahel. Besides military and civilian operations and missions, which focus on immediate crisis response and on mitigating the effects thereof, Czech Republic helps to shape and actively promotes policies pursued by the international community and the European Union towards the long-term stabilisation of these regions, including the alleviation of migratory pressures.



In particular, these policies comprise the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, the EU enlargement policy, European Neighbourhood Policy, development cooperation and humanitarian aid, the EU's contractual relations with third countries, and the EU common visa, asylum and immigration policy.

The Czech Republic believes that the **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)** is of key importance in terms of strengthening the cooperative approach to security issues on the European continent.

Active participation in **international arms control systems and in efforts at disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, especially within the UN**, are an important means of protecting security interests. The Czech Republic is keen to seek improvements in the system of the international export control of arms and dual-use items. Within the UN and other organisations, the Czech Republic will advocate an expansion in the number of States parties and the due implementation of the relevant international law instruments, including support for the universal scope of the Arms Trade Treaty.

The Czech Republic also espouses the diversification of **supplies of strategic resources**, especially as regards the source territories and transport infrastructure, and works towards reining in the energy sector's dependence on the entities, countries or regions on which it currently predominantly relies, i.e. especially on Eastern Europe. The foreign policy promotes energy and resource security interests within the framework of the European Union, international organisations, specialised agencies and bilateral relations, and in accordance with the Czech Republic's State Energy Concept and Resource Policy. Within the European Union, it works, in particular, towards better connectivity between Member States' energy systems, securing opportunities for reverse flows and completing the internal energy market, as well as enhancing energy efficiency.

Within the EU, NATO, the United Nations and other organisations, the Czech Republic will support measures to combat **international terrorism and organised crime**, including the negotiation of new international law instruments. As radicalisation tends to take root more easily where living conditions are undignified, plans to improve such conditions in the countries of origin of the terrorist threats – by promoting human rights and trade, development corporation and humanitarian aid – are central to these efforts.

4.2. Prosperity and Sustainable Development

Foreign policy helps to improve the material conditions and quality of life enjoyed by Czech citizens, thanks in particular to the openness of the Czech



economy. The broader aim of foreign policy is to contribute to rising global prosperity, leading to an improved worldwide security situation. However, this is conditional on the fact that such growth does not widen social and income gaps, is inclusive, spares natural resources and is environmentally friendly, and does not impair human dignity, and as such is sustainable. The Czech Republic's foreign policy operates on the assumption that the global South's economic development creates new opportunities for Czech entities and thus contributes to our own prosperity.

The Czech Republic's prosperity and sustainable development is primarily underpinned by our **membership in the European Union** and its **internal market**, along with other common policies making up the integration process, in particular the **common commercial policy, cohesion policy, environmental policy, and energy and climate policy**.

The European Union is and will remain the main platform for the pursuit of our foreign economic interests. The European Union's internal market, founded on the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital, the European social model, robust consumer protection and other common policies, including the protection of labour and environmental standards, rests at the core of European integration. The Czech Republic will champion further deepening and liberalisation of the EU's internal market as the principal means through which our competitiveness is maintained and improved, and will push for its completion especially in services, energy and the digital domain. The cohesion policy reflects the European solidarity consistently espoused by our foreign policy. It enables our economy to converge with wealthier European countries and helps to improve the interconnectivity with trans-European networks. The **free movement of persons** within the EU, whose preservation and reinforcement is a key priority for the Czech Republic, is also indispensable to the single market.

The liberalisation of world trade has the potential to make a vital contribution to the growth of global as well as our own prosperity. Through its involvement in the **EU's Common Commercial Policy**, the Czech Republic will seek to strengthen the multilateral trade system and the **World Trade Organisation (WTO)**, striving for agreement on transparent and firm trade and investment rules shared by as many countries as possible. Those rules must be configured in a way that will facilitate the balanced development of high-, middle- and low-income economies, and must help low-income countries to integrate into the global economy. These efforts are assisted by various bilateral and multilateral development cooperation instruments. The Czech Republic will also support free trade agreements between the EU and third countries and will seek to ensure that they are beneficial for our country.

Economic diplomacy is instrumental in increasing the Czech Republic's



prosperity in a global context by promoting our economic interests abroad. This includes creating conditions for the development of economic contacts, not only in the field of trade in goods and services, but also in investments, support for the economic sustainability of development cooperation projects, and backing for the development of tourism. Czech economic diplomacy will pay particular attention to non-European territories which show high growth potential but often pose risks in terms of the unpredictability of their political and economic environment, corruption or poor law enforcement. Economic diplomacy will help to establish contacts abroad and create conditions for Czech entities to enter third-country markets. The key export-led support instruments are the Enterprise Client Centre, the Czech Republic's single export support network, encompassing the economic activities of missions and CzechTrade offices abroad (with heads of mission playing a pivotal coordinating role), and the common Catalogue of Services, enabling the Czech exporters to navigate their way round the range of export support services offered by the government. The Czech Republic will also work towards extending cooperation in trade and investments with third countries, whether bilateral or – in collaboration with other partners – trilateral, which will consolidate the platform for Czech entities' operations on foreign markets.

A significant tool contributing to sustainable development is **development cooperation**, whose framework is defined by the Czech Republic's commitments within the European Union, the United Nations and the OECD, as reflected in the 2010-2017 Development Cooperation Concept and the 2013-2017 Multilateral Development Cooperation Strategy. It is based on the Czech Republic's status as a high-income economy with an interest in helping to reduce global inequalities. The Czech Republic's development cooperation will contribute, in particular, to the eradication of poverty and to the establishment of stable communities in less developed parts of the world by means of sustainable socio-economic development, while respecting the development goals and needs of partner countries involved in the programme and project planning at the level of central and local government as well as non-governmental actors. The Czech Republic will continue to work towards meeting its EU commitments so that the European Union comes closer to its collective target of 0.7% of gross national income spending on development cooperation, while ensuring the effective use of resources. It will also seek to align its development cooperation with other government policies that could have an impact on target countries. As part of its complex approach, the Czech Republic also intends to take account of the challenges posed by migration – in dialogue with partner countries and in the programming of assistance – within the scope of its development cooperation. Efforts to engage the private sector more actively in the sustainable development agenda, along with cooperation between the public, non-profit and private sectors, are another specific challenge.



Mindful of the fact that the pursuit of sustainable development needs to be a global effort, the Czech Republic's primary channel for achieving this is active involvement within the **United Nations**. In particular, the Czech Republic will actively contribute (especially via the European Union) to the formulation and subsequent pursuit of **sustainable development goals**. These will build on the Millennium Development Goals and will also redefine the framework for the Czech Republic's development cooperation, whose Concept will be adapted to those changes. Sustainable development is an issue directly linked to efforts at **curbing climate change**, which also has a significant security and human dimension. The Czech Republic aims to strike a global binding deal at the conference of states parties to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Accordingly, it will support the emerging economies in adopting measures to meet their commitments and thus help to advance the global shift towards low-emission development.

4.3. Human Dignity and Human Rights

Another overarching objective of the Czech Republic's foreign policy is to promote global efforts to safeguard a dignified life. It operates on the assumption that achieving human dignity, while a value of and for itself, also contributes to international security in that it staves off or restricts security threats, such as regional conflicts, terrorism and irregular migration, and underpins sustainable development.

A policy of promoting **human rights and democracy** is fundamental to the safeguarding of human dignity. Czech foreign policy is based on the principles of universality and the indivisibility of human rights, within the scope of which civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights are crucial for a dignified existence; the denial of such rights violates human dignity and may invite international instability. In compliance with the EU's strategic framework for human rights and democracy, the Czech Republic adheres to a principle of human rights and democracy mainstreaming in other aspects of foreign policy, and recognises the need for the coherence of foreign and national human rights policies. It presupposes that human rights and democracy can be effectively supported in a situation where mutual respect and dialogue exist, but cannot be abandoned even in less favourable circumstances. This dialogue will centre both on serious human rights violations as well as on positive human rights themes resonating within the respective society. Support for human rights defenders is integral to these efforts. The promotion of human rights includes sharing the Czech experience of the transition to democracy and sustainable social market economy with transition countries and societies interested in this experience. The Czech Republic will pay particular attention to harnessing social dialogue for the more effective promotion of economic and social rights.



In its multilateral activity, the Czech Republic will continue to be involved in the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council and other UN bodies, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). In addition, the Czech Republic will promote human rights within the European Union and its common positions on human rights agendas, as well as in the form of human rights consultations across regional groupings of human rights organisations. Within the Council of Europe, Czech Republic will continue its efforts to maintain the long-term functionality and further development of the monitoring system in place for the European Convention of Human Rights.

Development co-operation is also instrumental in the advocacy of human dignity. The promotion of democracy, human rights and transition represents one of its sectoral priorities. Development cooperation contributes to the pursuit of the objective of human dignity in part by incorporating cross-cutting principles into its activities. These are good governance, environmental and climate friendliness, and respect for human rights. Commitments to eradicate poverty and combat inequalities, as part and parcel of sustainable development, spearhead the pursuit of human dignity.

Natural or man-made disasters and armed conflicts, which have been mushrooming in response to climate change, the battle for resources and the scarcity of food and water also pose a threat to human dignity. **Humanitarian aid**, the aims of which are to prevent loss of life, stave off health problems, alleviate suffering and restore basic living conditions for people stricken by emergencies, or to assist those countries plagued by a protracted humanitarian crisis, is instrumental in countering the immediate aftermath of such disasters. Czech foreign policy will continue to provide humanitarian aid on the basis of annual operational strategies and in cooperation with key multilateral actors, in particular the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the European Union, while respecting the principles of good donorship. Special attention will be channelled into increasing the resilience and implementing the new global disaster prevention framework, as well as applying international humanitarian law.

In addition, Czech foreign policy will focus on **supporting particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups**, and in particular on supporting their equal access to participation in public life and on protecting religious minorities. The Czech Republic will also work towards the global strengthening of women's place in society. Although this assistance will typically be provided as part of the general promotion of human rights, the Czech Republic will raise this issue more actively within the United Nations because it considers it to be a serious global problem that cannot be reduced to human rights or development issues. The Czech Republic will concentrate in particular on matters related to women's participation in public life.



Support for international penal justice, especially the **International Criminal Court (ICC)**, is an integral factor in the pursuit of human dignity. The Czech Republic will support the universality of ICC's Rome Statute, seek the prosecution of perpetrators of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression, and push for action by the international community to exclude impunity of the crimes under international law.

4.4. Serving Citizens

One of the upshots of today's interconnected world is much greater global mobility. Increasing numbers of Czech citizens are travelling to or putting down roots in other countries, just as more and more foreigners are making their way to the Czech Republic. International mobility is a great opportunity for Czech society to exchange knowledge and absorb fresh impetus, but also poses significant risks.

The **consular and visa service** is a key foreign-policy instrument in exploiting the opportunities and tackling the challenges of international mobility. This service exists to provide the assistance required by nationals of the Czech Republic and other EU Member States when they are abroad by protecting their interests and providing them with information and with assistance in problematic situations. In relation to third-party nationals, it plays a key role in regulating their entry into and residence in the Czech Republic or, more broadly, the Schengen area. The Czech foreign policy strives for a balanced approach that will enable free-movement opportunities to be used to the maximum while eliminating potential risks. It will also aim to improve the consular and visa service, guaranteeing the dignified treatment of Czech citizens and visa applicants and consolidating the Czech Republic's positive image abroad. This will be enabled by linking the Czech missions network to the eGovernment information system, making it possible to expand the portfolio of services provided to citizens abroad. Agreements on mutual representation in issuing of visas, the number of which is constantly being extended by the Czech Republic, account for a large proportion of the consular agenda. Foreign policy is also tasked with supporting visa facilitation process in cases where it is in the Czech Republic's interest.

4.5. Reputation Abroad

One of the aims of foreign policy is to encourage a positive perception of the Czech Republic within the international community. Czech foreign policy will pay particular attention to the Czech Republic's **branding** in the knowledge that this must be adapted to the target territory and encompass a wide range of topics: historical and cultural links, industrial tradition, innovation potential, transition experience, human capital, scientific accomplishments, sport, tourist



potential, etc. The promotion of the Czech Republic's reputation will be set out in more detail in the updated Concept of the Czech Republic's uniform presentation abroad.

Culture is at the heart of support of the country's reputation, and foreign policy must reflect this accordingly. The Czech Republic's culture is what makes it unmistakable in the international community. It is a natural means of painting a distinct picture of the values espoused by the Czech Republic. The language it uses is universally understandable and portable. Furthermore, an active cultural policy abroad helps to forge and reinforce bonds that extend far beyond the realm of cultural exchanges.

The Czech Republic's reputation is promoted by various forms of diplomacy: traditional (political), economic, public and cultural. It anticipates close cooperation between state administration bodies, specialised agencies, regions, towns and municipalities under the co-ordination by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The network of **Czech Centres** abroad serves as the tool for public diplomacy. The process of raising awareness of the Czech Republic also targets an increase in the number of tourists and international conference delegates, an area supported by the **CzechTourism** agency in particular. Czech foreign policy will seek to ensure the greatest possible synergy in the activities of these and other agencies, such as CzechTrade and CzechInvest.

Cooperation with the Czech diaspora is another important way of fostering the Czech Republic's reputation. The Czech foreign policy will focus not only on working with traditional compatriot communities formed in the wake of emigration during the 19th and 20th centuries in particular, but also on expats who have acquired a permanent or long-term residence abroad as a result of more widespread international mobility on the globalised international stage. Similarly, Czech foreign policy intends to make more use of the community of foreign nationals who have settled permanently or long term in the Czech Republic as they are in a position to help spread the reputation of the Czech Republic in their countries of origin.

5. Territorial Scope of the Czech Foreign Policy

5. 1. Euro-Atlantic Area

The Czech Republic's most significant foreign-policy relations have been established in the Euro-Atlantic area, primarily defined by EU and NATO membership, but also including countries seeking EU and NATO membership or closely interlinked with the EU. In this area of shared values, the Czech Republic enjoys **friendly relations** and shared security with the other members. In the EU in particular, the differences between domestic and foreign



policy are becoming blurred, and interdependency is viewed as an opportunity rather than a threat. Engagement in the EU is set out in more detail in the Concept of the Czech Republic's EU Policy.

The Czech Republic is an advocate of strengthening the Euro-Atlantic area's organisations, especially the EU and NATO. It actively champions trade and investment agreements, particularly agreements with the US and Canada. It supports coordinated approach in the pursuit of common objectives, in the tackling of common problems and in the reinforcement of the multilateral global order. It also fosters the most intensive possible bilateral relations with all countries in the area while paying special attention to priority regions and prominent actors. Priority regions for the Czech Republic are Central Europe, South-eastern Europe and Eastern Europe. Outside of those regions, it identifies the United States, France and the UK as prominent actors.

The Czech Republic regards the **United States** as the frontline guarantor of Euro-Atlantic security. It will continue to nurture cooperation with the US in science, research, defence, economics and human rights. It will push for the liberalisation of trade between the EU and the US, subject to the preservation of European social, environmental and consumer standards, including food safety standards, as well as cooperation between the EU and the US in global matters such as climate change, international economic regulation, the pursuit of sustainable development goals and the fight against international terrorism.

The Czech Republic will continue to develop its strategic partnership with **France**, focusing on the economy, energy, defence and security, education and culture. It also ascribes an important role to the **United Kingdom**, especially as far as the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and common commercial policy are concerned.

Central Europe

Central Europe represents a neighbourly region epitomised by cultural proximity and intensive cooperation at all levels of state and society which the Czech Republic will strive at enhancing further. From the Czech Republic's standpoint, the most important place within Central Europe is assigned to the other Visegrad Group countries, i.e. Slovakia, Poland and Hungary, as well as to Germany and Austria as neighbours.

With regard to **Slovakia**, the Czech foreign policy, thanks in part to the two countries' close historical, economic, political and interpersonal links, will aim at maintaining the superior and strategic nature of mutual relations and at reinforcing them primarily by coordinating the countries' positions in the EU and other international organisations, and by stepping up cooperation in energy, transport infrastructure, defence, the environment, education and culture. It will continue intensive intergovernmental dialogue, which will



include joint government meetings.

Germany is the key partner of the Czech Republic thanks to the economic interconnection between the two countries and the intrinsic value of Germany to the EU, the world economy and, increasingly, international security. The Czech Republic engages in strategic dialogue with Germany that extends beyond the framework of foreign policy and becomes an element in efforts to improve the Czech Republic's track record in promoting its interests in the EU, as well as in energy, the environment, internal and external security, science and research, cross-border cooperation and transport infrastructure. The Czech Republic will continue to promote societal dialogue via the Czech-German Future Fund. Attention will focus on intensifying cooperation at the level of civil society and cooperation with the federal states neighbouring the Czech Republic.

In relation to **Poland**, the Czech Republic will pursue a strategic partnership reflected, in part, in joint government meetings, with an emphasis on cooperation within the V4 and the EU. The two countries' bilateral relationship will focus on cooperation in security and defence, energy, transport (including further work on completing transport links), culture and the environment. As far as civil society is concerned, dialogue will continue via the Czech-Polish forum.

With regard to **Austria**, the Czech Republic will work towards establishing closer contact and building a network of trust at a political level, as well as between the two countries' central governments, local government bodies and civil society, so that the relationship emulates the intensity of relations enjoyed with other neighbours. Foreign policy will concentrate on collaboration in their approach to the Western Balkans and development cooperation. For the Czech Republic, **Hungary** is an "honorary" rather than a direct neighbour. The intensity of political contact and cooperation at various levels of society must correspond to this status, and the foreign policy will seek to reinforce this area.

Regional cooperation is indispensable to the Czech Republic's Central European policy. The **Visegrad Group (V4)** remains its basic platform. This format will also be harnessed to foster cooperation with other geographically close or like-minded states, countries in the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership, and to engage in debate with key actors on the international stage if they are interested in contributing to the V4's activities, provided that this is in the Czech Republic's interests. The primary objectives pursued by the Visegrad Group should be to build trust between state and non-state actors within the group, to nurture internal cohesion, to increase the influence wielded by the group within the European Union, NATO and other international organisations, and in the pursuit of shared priorities in foreign policy and other sectoral matters. Besides the V4 format, Czech foreign policy will also remain



open to other forms of Central European cooperation, such as cooperation with Slovakia and Austria in the “Austerlitz format” in areas of common interest, including neighbourly cooperation, energy, transport and education.

South-eastern Europe

The Czech Republic enjoys long-standing political, economic and cultural ties with countries from the Balkans. The Czech Republic is a proponent of the efforts made by **Serbia**, other **Western Balkan** countries and **Turkey** to integrate with the European Union as a means of ensuring stability, the democratic rule of law and prosperity in South-eastern Europe. EU-level support is both political and technical, articulated primarily by the mediation of the Czech transition and accession process experience, as well as efforts for the more extensive involvement of Czech entities in pre-accession cooperation programmes. The Czech Republic will support candidate countries' membership only if they comply with all conditions of membership while rejecting the introduction of additional conditions into the accession process. On the contrary, it will strive to address the bilateral problems between the EU's Member States and candidate countries or potential candidate countries outside of the enlargement policy framework, and will support the reform process geared towards compliance with membership requirements.

Economic diplomacy, development cooperation and transition assistance are salient components of bilateral relations with countries in this region. Czech foreign policy will also work towards strengthening political contacts and ministerial cooperation between Czech state administration and countries in South-eastern Europe, which are currently under their potential from the perspective of declared importance of the region for the Czech foreign policy.

Eastern Europe

For geographical, historical, economic and strategic reasons, the Czech Republic has a particular interest in the security, stability and prosperity of Eastern Europe. It respects the right of the countries in the region to choose their own foreign-policy orientation and integration preferences. However, these cannot be coerced by external pressures and coarse interference in their internal affairs. Nor will the Czech Republic accept any disruption of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states which is not compliant with international law. Economic diplomacy, development cooperation, transition assistance and human rights are the central components of bilateral relations.

The Czech Republic will support and shape the European Union's **Eastern Partnership** policy, which must better reflect the expectations of partner countries and, in this respect, differentiate between them. In relation to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, the Eastern Partnership and the Czech Republic's foreign policy will focus on implementing association agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements, and on the



implementation of related reforms. Depending on the progress made, they will be provided with additional benefits, including economic advantages. In these countries, the Czech Republic will support civil society and free media, as these are important factors in the pursuit of association agreement objectives and in social transformation. In the longer term, the Czech Republic encourages the European choice of these countries. As far as Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus are concerned, it is essential to tap into bilateral economic opportunities, to hold human rights dialogue, and to try to keep the multilateral format of the Eastern Partnership afloat as this will facilitate involvement in joint projects and, where appropriate, in a common economic space with the European Union. Relations with these countries should also take account of alternative integration projects in Eastern Europe (e.g. the Eurasian Union), insofar as these are aimed at forming an inclusive economic area and provided that the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Eastern Partners and the rules of the World Trade Organisation are respected.

5.2. Other Territories

The Czech Republic is keen to maintain **smooth relations** with all countries, characterised by an absence of mutual threats, severe human rights violations and breaches of international law, while offering opportunities for economic exchange. Where possible, it plans to move forward with **partner relations** that will encompass political cooperation and, where appropriate, will enhance the economic potential of the relationship. Political cooperation, economic diplomacy and the support of human dignity are central components of bilateral relations. In the promotion of economic cooperation, possibility of strategic dependence needs to be assessed and the Czech Republic's vulnerability needs to be minimised. The Czech Republic's foreign policy towards non-EU countries is guided by the Common Foreign and Security Policy as well as other EU policies. It also draws on these policies' instruments and seeks to adapt them to its own interests.

Russia

Despite the fact that Russia currently severely destabilizes the European security architecture, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council it remains a significant player in addressing numerous issues of international importance, and in this respect we need to cooperate with it. By its potential, Russia represents an important political and economic partner for the Czech Republic and the EU. Czech policy towards Russia, including the level of political and economic contacts, will hinge on the Russian Federation's respect for international law and for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of its neighbours. Given the current state of play, Czech foreign policy will seek constructive cooperation with the **Russian Federation** primarily in economic and cultural areas, and will strive to establish the broadest possible contacts



with Russian civil society. The long-term objective is to overcome the current turmoil and nurture a partnership.

Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) comprise a region neighbouring Europe and are key drivers of international events. This region is typified by its mounting instability and unpredictability and by its spiralling number of armed conflicts. Important factors influencing developments in the region include the ascendance of Islamic movements, both moderate and radical, sectarian conflicts in Iraq and Lebanon, long-standing conflicts in Syria and Libya, strategic rivalry in the Gulf, and the influence that countries in this area have on regional developments. The Czech Republic will endorse a review of the southern dimension of the **European Neighbourhood Policy** that will facilitate greater differentiation between the individual countries and will pursue targeted policies aimed at meeting the expectations not only of those countries' governments, but also their population.

Strategic partnership with Israel remains the Czech policy's salient bilateral priority in the region, epitomised by joint government meetings and cooperation in science and research, investment, defence, economy and culture. The Czech Republic will also continue developing political and economic contacts with the **Palestinian Authority** and providing development cooperation in a bid to contribute to the Palestinian representation's preparations for full statehood.

The Czech Republic will continue its support for the objectives of the Middle East Peace Process aimed at reaching a settlement in the form of two independent states. In addition, it will warn both parties of the harmfulness of any action undermining these objectives.

The Czech Republic will develop its economic partnerships in particular with **Israel**, the **Gulf region states** and **countries in North Africa**. It will also contribute to the international community's efforts to find a diplomatic and politically sustainable solution to the Syrian conflict, and will support the international community's actions geared towards stamping out the so-called **Islamic State** and similar extremist groups. It will also back efforts to actively engage the region's countries in the solutions to these problems. The Czech Republic is a supporter of the international community's negotiations on the Iranian nuclear programme, aimed at minimising the security risks in the region. Depending on the outcome, it will work towards standardising diplomatic relations with Iran.

Asia and the Pacific

The Asia-Pacific area represents primarily a region of significant economic opportunities for the Czech Republic. It recruits prominent non-European



business and innovation partners, as well as investors. Its expanding economic, political, and security importance makes it one of the world's key regions.

China is one of the world's largest economies and significant actor in tackling problems of global importance. The Czech Republic will seek regular political dialogue with China, enabling it to foster cooperation in a number of areas, including the economy, the health sector, environmental protection, science and research, culture and human rights. Besides bilateral relations, the frontline framework for dialogue with China is the strategic partnership established between the EU and the People's Republic of China. The Czech Republic also believes that there are opportunities to develop mutual economic relations by negotiating an investment agreement between the EU and China.

Japan and the **Republic of Korea** represent advanced democratic countries, global leaders in innovation, and major investors in the Czech Republic, with whom partnerships at all levels can be developed. The strategic partnership with South Korea in particular could help to move bilateral cooperation forwards, and could also become a springboard for further Czech activity in the region. In relation to Japan, the Czech Republic will mainly focus on the conclusion of agreements on economic cooperation and free trade with the EU. Czech foreign policy will also pay greater attention to cooperation with ASEAN countries in economic, security and other areas, building for example on the superior cooperation it enjoys with Vietnam. The dominant economic partner in **South Asia** is **India**. An important issue here, however, is security (Afghanistan), while in **Central Asia** important issues are linked to energy security.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa is a region adjacent to countries neighbouring Europe. While its widespread mineral resources and high growth dynamics are considered economic opportunities, its poorly addressed security, economic and social problems carry repercussions that directly affect EU Member States due to migratory pressures as well as human, drug and arms trafficking. The Czech Republic will contribute to multilateral stabilising activities, especially within the EU framework, which encompasses Common Security and Defence Policy missions, as well as humanitarian aid and development co-operation. The African Union is also considered an important partner, especially in the support of stability and good governance. In its bilateral relations, the Czech Republic will focus especially on **Ethiopia**, as a priority country of bilateral development cooperation programme, **South Africa**, as the most advanced economy and a member of the G20 and BRICS, and **Nigeria**, as the most populous African country with the largest economy, which is also of fundamental importance in terms of regional and – by extension – European security. This region will also benefit from bilateral development co-operation, transition assistance and



humanitarian aid.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean, while a geographically distant area, are developing with great momentum and are historically and culturally close. After an era of dictatorships, the region now enjoys relative stability and its global importance is on the rise – Brazil, Mexico and Argentina are G20 members, Brazil and Mexico are strategic EU partners, and Brazil is also a member of BRICS. The Czech Republic's foreign policy towards this region will concentrate primarily on economic diplomacy and, in this respect, on relations with Brazil and the Pacific Alliance countries. The Czech Republic is also making efforts to move forward negotiations on the EU's free trade agreement with MERCOSUR countries and a review of the EU's free-trade agreement with Mexico. In relation to Cuba, the Czech Republic is interested in establishing political dialogue while maintaining its activities geared towards the promotion of human rights. In political and security terms, the Czech Republic will strive for dialogue with countries in the region primarily in the framework of the EU and the United Nations.

6. Implementation of the Concept

This Concept forms the basis for the pursuit of the Czech Republic's foreign policy in the long term. It will be assessed after no more than three years to determine whether it requires updating or revision. The Concept is implemented in the medium and short term through other instruments.

Separate implementing ministerial or government concepts or strategies will be drawn up for the individual cross-sectional themes or specific instruments of foreign policy. More detailed terms for the implementation of foreign policy can be found in other concept papers adopted by the Czech Government, especially the Concept of the Czech Republic's EU Policy, the Security Strategy of the Czech Republic, the Export Strategy of the Czech Republic and others.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also draws up annual thematic and territorial guidelines of foreign policy, which lay down the objectives which are to be achieved in the forthcoming period in accordance with this Concept. These priorities will be reflected in the preparations of the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The annual foreign-policy guidelines will also include an evaluation of the priorities for the previous period.

This Concept is implemented by the respective constitutional bodies and bodies of state administration in accordance with their powers as defined by the Constitution and other legal acts. The main coordinator in the implementation of this Concept is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Regular meetings of



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constitutional actors on the coordination of key foreign policy issues are an important aspect in the implementation of this Concept. The implementation of this Concept relies on a professional, qualified and efficient foreign service, which the Czech Republic will strive to develop further and stabilise.