

Address of the President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic

Mr. Milan Štěch at a reception held on the occasion of 100th anniversary of establishment
of a common state of Czech and Slovaks

17. 10. 2018

Dear Mr. President,

Dear Mr. Speaker of the National Council,

Ladies and gentlemen,

- It is a great honour for me to be here with you today and to commemorate one of the most important events in the history of Czech and Slovak Republics, the centenary of establishment of independent Czechoslovakia.
- 28. October 1918 was the day when our common future begun. We have overcome more than one joint obstacle and arrived where we are today. You would hardly find other two countries in the world that are so close to each other. We are bound by common history, but also culture, language and a very close mentality. One must not leave out yet another important anniversary in this respect. We are also commemorating 25 years from the division of Czechoslovakia. We have shown the entire world that one country can be divided into two independent states calmly and peacefully while maintaining extraordinary and friendly relations, which is by no means a matter of course.
- Today, we are two relatively small, but prosperous countries in the heart of Europe and I think that we are doing really well. Our economies are booming, the unemployment rates are record-low, the wages and standards of living are on a rise. We are moving up the ladder of economic performance and we already among 35 most

advanced countries of the world. In short, we live in times that following the recent economic crisis appear as affluence. However, we must not rest on our laurels offered by the current economic situation.

- One of the reasons for the state of affairs today is undoubtedly our EU membership. Although we set on two different paths namely in the area of adoption of single currency, which is a major step that remains the main topic of discussion in the Czech Republic, we can see that Slovakia took the right decision. Ten years have already passed since you introduced the single European currency and I dare to say it did not bring any long-term negative effects. On the contrary, Slovakia is now catching up with advanced western countries in terms of economic performance faster compared to the Czech Republic.
- We also managed to agree on key EU issues such as obligatory quotas for redistribution of refugees and often times we acted as one, because as I have already mentioned, we are two relatively small countries in a big Europe and we can be heard better if we speak one voice which is also true about the whole Visegrad Group.
- One hundred years is an exceptionally long period of time for an individual, but it is different for an entire nation. Still, the life in Europe has changed beyond recognition. The same applies to Czechoslovakia, which is now the Czech and Slovak Republic. We possess technologies nobody could even imagine a hundred years ago. Information has never been more available and travelling easier.
- Though one must remember that none of this shall be taken for granted and we did not get it for free. We live in freedom and democracy our ancestors died for. Let's appreciate their sacrifices and let's build countries based on ideas on which president Masaryk

with the support of Edvard Beneš, Milan Rastislav Štefánik and other founding fathers laid the cornerstones of our two countries. I very well remember one Masaryk's quote: "*Should our democracy display some flaws, we need to surpass such flaws, but we shall not surpass the democracy.*" This sentence is in my opinion still very topical.

- Ladies and gentlemen, I am truly happy to be here with you today and I hope our already above-standard mutual relations will only continue to develop.