

SPEECH DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR IVO ŠRÁMEK
CZPRES 2022 OPENING CEREMONY
(5.7.2022, RATHAUS DER STADT WIEN)

Welcome to the official opening of the CZ Presidency in the EU here in Vienna. I would like to thank you, Herr Bürgermeister, for your kind words, your support and for providing us with this this majestic space for the opening ceremony. Vienna truly is one of the great world centers of diplomacy and the term “Vienna spirit” has become legendary in diplomatic circles around the world and we’ll need a lot of it, to tackle the difficult tasks which stand ahead of us.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Czech Republic is taking over the EU Presidency at a difficult time, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia has completely overhauled the geopolitical situation and Europe as such has never faced so many serious challenges threatening our security and prosperity since the end of the cold war.

At the same time, the events of the last months have also demonstrated that we, Europeans, when facing a crisis triggered by an external threat, are able to act quickly, effectively and in a united way And that’s the EU formula for success.

This brutal war of aggression just outside the EU borders has shown us that we have to find courage to reevaluate a number of our current policies. That’s why we have chosen the following motto of the Czech EU Presidency: “Europe as a task, to rethink, rebuild, and repower Europe”, the motto which is inspired by the thoughts of Václav Havel, the Czech Republic’s first president and thinker.

We believe that we together in the EU must find a policy mix that will ensure peace and security on our continent, and lead the EU towards its long term goals of the green and digital transitions, while at the same time making it possible to deal effectively with the present security, energy and humanitarian crises as well as with all the acute economic and social challenges that are partly due to the Covid pandemic and now are exacerbated by Russia’s aggression.

That’s why during our Presidency, the Czech Republic focuses on five closely linked priority areas in order to respond evolving situation of the last months:

In responding to the biggest refugee crises in Europe since the end of the Second World War we have chosen as the first priority **“Managing the refugee crisis and preparing for Ukraine’s post-war recovery”**.

At the same time the Czech Presidency will continue to support Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity by using all instruments and programs offered by the EU. That includes the strengthening of sanctions. Another important task for the EU will be post war reconstruction of Ukraine. **Securing the necessary financial resources across the free world** for implementation of this task will be crucial.

The second priority covers another urgent issue - **energy security**, where we’d like to put emphasis on diversification of sources including logistics, energy savings and acceleration of the transition to low-emission and renewable energy sources and very importantly on

reducing our dependence on hostile or unstable regimes in order to strengthen the EU energy security resilience.

The third priority deals with **strengthening Europe's defense capabilities and cyberspace security** including in partnership with NATO. We will also focus on cyber threats and the fight against disinformation and the security of cyberspace.

The fourth priority is **strategic resilience of the European economy**. The main objective again is to reduce our dependence on hostile or unstable regimes in order to strengthen the EU strategic resilience. The Czech Presidency will therefore work on accelerating the process of concluding trade agreements with democratic states, including joint measures for strengthening supply chain resilience.

The last / fifth priority concentrates on **strengthening democratic institutions**: Russian aggression once again reminded us strongly that Europe's long-term prosperity and stability are based on functioning democratic mechanisms. In the international context, we will focus on implementation of the European Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy in order to strengthen capacities to support civil society and independent media, as well as support partner countries' resilience against cyber and hybrid threats.

This was briefly about Czech Presidency priorities, you are most welcome to visit the EU2022.CZ website to learn more.

You can see, we have ambitious plans, that is what difficult times require, but we are not alone, there are 27 EU Member States and we are team players working within the EU trio and in close collaboration with the EU delegation's able ambassadors and their teams. Our predecessors French Presidency, and we appreciate their work very much, put the Presidency bar high and we'd like to keep it that way and pass it on to our Swedish colleagues in six-month time. We rely on your cooperation and support. Thank you very much for your attention.