



CZECH REPUBLIC

Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations

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Statement by

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First Secretary

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Thank you, Mr. President.

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Protection and promotion of human rights, including online, is a cornerstone of the Czech foreign policy.

Digital technologies affect every aspect of our lives. The Covid-19 pandemic has further demonstrated significant impact of digital technologies on the way we work, communicate, progress in education or receive medical care. While new technologies have great potential to contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights, they also pose significant challenges to human rights. With ongoing digitalization and advances of new technologies, the need to protect all human rights is becoming more urgent.

The Czech Republic underlines that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online. Human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, are as applicable in cyberspace as they are in the physical domain. The Czech Republic further reiterates the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We strive for an effective implementation of existing human rights standards, both online and offline, and support the role of national and international monitoring mechanisms in the area of human rights. In this context, we are active in various multilateral organizations, including the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, and other relevant platforms. Within these fora, we promote the concept of digital humanism, and the human rights-based and human-centric approach to new and emerging digital technologies.

During the ongoing Czech EU Presidency, we work to ensure that fundamental rights and freedoms are respected in the digital environment. We pledged to address digital challenges and to promote a human-centric and human rights-based approach in our commitments for our current membership in the UN Human Rights Council. We are further engaged in the ongoing negotiations on a new regulation of artificial intelligence in the EU, as well as in the discussions in the Council of Europe on a new legally binding instrument on the impact of artificial intelligence on human rights. Recently, the Czech Republic has also become a proud signatory of the Tech for Democracy initiative, spearheaded by our Danish colleagues.

Strengthening cooperation with civil society and its support, including via financial assistance, forms an essential part of our work.

We are deeply concerned about shrinking civic and democratic spaces online. We reject any violence, persecution, harassment and intimidation of individuals, including journalists, human rights defenders and other members of civil society, because of their exercise of the right to freedom of expression.

Through projects of our Transition Promotion Programme, we support the freedom, pluralism and independence of the media, including on the Internet, which provide access to information and views, and facilitate public debate and informed decision-making on matters of public interest.

In conclusion, we would like to underline that addressing impacts of new technologies requires a multi-stakeholder approach to policy-making: national authorities, national human rights institutions, academia, civil society, human rights defenders, international organisations and the private sector have to join efforts in identifying common solutions. States, however, are responsible for the protection of human rights of their citizens, and therefore play a central role in guaranteeing human rights and the rule of law online.

Thank you.