



CZECH REPUBLIC

Statement by

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at the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

United Nations Headquarters

New York, 15 March 2016

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Mr. Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is an honour and privilege to address this session of the Commission on the Status of Women on behalf of the Czech Republic. Aligning with the Dutch statement on behalf of the European Union, I reassert the commitment of the Czech government to the promotion of gender equality and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The link between gender equality and sustainable development is clear. An increasing number of studies indicate that gender inequalities are extracting high economic costs and environmental degradation around the world. Without gender equality sustainable future and social justice cannot be achieved.

Sustainable development is closely linked to all areas of gender equality as defined by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other international instruments for empowerment of women. Under-representation of women in decision-making, gender inequalities in the labour market, violence against women, persisting gender stereotypes or low engagement of men in care continue to hinder social development.

I am glad that active promotion of gender equality continues to be one of the priorities of the Czech Government. As a signal of the reinforced commitment to gender equality and as a practical tool for planning, the Government in November 2014 adopted the Strategy for Equality of Women and Men in the Czech Republic.

The Czech Government has been paying increased attention to the gender equality in the labour market which we consider to be one of the key elements of women's rights. In this respect we can identify several positive trends in the Czech Republic. In 2015, women made up 56 per cent of all university students and 60 per cent of graduates. The employment rate of women aged 20-64 is over 64 per cent and has increased by more than 3 percentage points since 2010. The gender pay gap has been reduced from 24 per cent to 21.6 per cent in 2015. Despite these positive developments women still face many challenges and barriers in balancing their professional and private life including a low level of male participation in childcare as

well as other forms of care.

In order to help reconcile work and private life, the Act on Children Groups was adopted and entered into force in November 2014. The Government of the Czech Republic has also prepared an amendment to the Education Act which guarantees pre-schoolers the right to a place in a kindergarten from the age of four by 2017 and from the age of three by 2018. In addition, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is implementing a special grant program aimed at increasing the capacity of kindergartens and elementary schools.

Elimination of violence against women is another important aspect of women's rights and gender equality. Prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls has been an integral part of the gender equality policy of the Czech Government since the 1990s.

The new Action Plan for the Prevention of Domestic and Gender-based Violence for 2015 – 2018 was approved by the Czech Government in February 2015. Following the adoption of the Action Plan my Office organised two international conferences within the 16 days of activism against violence against women in November and December 2015. The first was focused on the economic and societal costs of domestic violence and included speakers from various European countries. The second was focused on the issue of rape with the objective of opening a public debate on this topic within the Czech Republic.

At its session on 8 February 2016 the Czech Government also formally agreed to sign the Istanbul Convention and recommended the signing of the Convention to the President of the Czech Republic.

Active promotion of gender equality is now the priority of the Czech Government not only at the domestic but also at the international level. This has been embedded in the Government's Policy Statement and in the recently adopted Strategy for Human Rights and Democracy Promotion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Equal political participation and nondiscrimination, are issues of particular concern for the Czech Republic in its foreign human rights policy

Gender mainstreaming belongs to the cross-cutting principles reflected in the Czech development cooperation and transition promotion programme. In 2014 and 2015, projects focused on protecting women's rights and enhancing their participation in public life were implemented in Albania, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Burma/Myanmar, Nepal, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Palestine and Egypt. Projects also contributed to improving health care for women in Georgia, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Namibia, Senegal and Zambia. In addition, Czech development cooperation has supported economic empowerment of women and prevention of gender-based violence in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Serbia.

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,
allow me to stress that engaging men into promotion of gender equality is crucial. Gender equality is not a women's issue, it is a human issue. I myself have expressed my personal commitment on various occasions. Together with Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka and Foreign Minister Lubomír Zaorálek I joined the "He For She" campaign run by UN WOMEN in June 2015. I also joined the White Ribbon Campaign in November 2015. I would like to take this opportunity to call on all men around the world to step up for gender equality and women's rights.

In conclusion, allow me to invite you to our two side-events dedicated to two important topics connected to sustainable development. The first side-event on the role of technological and social innovation in promotion of gender equality will be held on Wednesday at ten. The second one is dedicated to gender based violence and starts on Thursday at three in the afternoon.

Let me reassure you of the Czech Republic's commitment to protecting women's rights and promoting gender equality. We have come a long way but there remains a long way to go.

Thank you for your attention.