**44th session of the HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**Interactive Dialogue on annual report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Item 2), 30 June 2020**

**Statement by the Czech Republic**

Thank you, (Madame President),

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the EU statement (and has some additional remarks).

Madame High Commissioner,

We thank you for the presentation (of your Annual Report) which shows the breadth of activities undertaken (by you and your Office, aiming at promotion of human rights all over the world). We appreciate your efforts and reiterate our support for your (and your Office´s) independence. We encourage you to continue speaking up openly against grave human rights violations (and abuses wherever they occur).

The Czech Republic appreciates your focus on the COVID-19 context, used by many governments to impose restrictions on civil society and to silence critical voices. We are alarmed by the clampdown on freedom of expression, a further tightening of censorship, suppressing critics of Government´s response or ordinary citizens for simply sharing information (about the pandemic or unsafe working conditions for health workers). Russia´s tightening control over internet infrastructure, online content and the privacy of communications and China´s cases of medical professionals, academics and bloggers detained raise concerns. We are deeply worried about the further reduction of democratic space in Venezuela as well as about the humanitarian crisis aggravated by the pandemic. (5 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants are seeking safety abroad, mostly in neighbouring countries.)

We are concerned over the steps taken by China contradicting the Hong Kong Basic Law, putting additional pressure on human rights. Public debates and participation in the decision-making process relating to national security legislature is crucial. Deteriorating human rights situation, including the treatment of minorities in Xinjiang and Tibet, (and of human rights defenders and lawyers) worries us. We condemn the recent conviction of human rights lawyer Yu Wensheng.

Furthermore, we are concerned about possible adverse effects of Russia´s draft amendments to the Constitution[[1]](#footnote-1) on its commitments under international human rights law. I thank you.

1. relating to the execution of decisions by the European Court of Human Rights and to dismissal of the judges of the Constitutional Court at the request of the President, which makes the Court vulnerable to political pressure [↑](#footnote-ref-1)