**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**46th session**

**General debate on the oral update by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**25 February 2021**

**Statement by the Czech Republic**

Thank you, Madame President.

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

Madame High Commissioner, we wish to thank you for your oral update. It reminded us again about the serious **challenges to the realization of human rights** faced by the international community. We commend your efforts to openly describe the current state of human rights in the world as well as to conduct frank dialogue with States and this Council.

The Czech Republic continues to support and defend the **independence and integrity of your mandate**. We appreciate the work of your Office in the field and reiterate our call on all States to positively engage with the OHCHR, including by granting it unconditional access to their territory when a relevant request is made. We reaffirm our own commitment to fully and constructively **cooperate** with the Office.

Our support to the OHCHR is also expressed by our annual voluntary **financial contributions**. Nevertheless, we are concerned about the current challenging financial situation faced by the Office, which might negatively impact the implementation of some activities mandated by the Council. We repeat our call to strengthen the funding of the Office by regular budgeting.

Madame High Commissioner, we welcome your comprehensive report on the human rights implications of the **COVID-19 pandemic**. We appreciate your focus on the considerable impacts of the pandemic on public participation and civic space, the role of media and restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly that go beyond what is strictly necessary from a public health point of view. We also concur with you that the COVID-19 related restrictions should not be used in the context of electoral processes to weaken or repress opposition voices and to supress dissent.

We thank you also for you reports on Sri Lanka and Nicaragua, and you oral update on Eritrea. We are concerned by the serious findings in the report on **Sri Lanka** informing about early warning signals and we acknowledge the report’s important recommendations. We respect the progress made by the Government in a number of areas and welcome the ongoing commitment by the Government of Sri Lanka to engage with international community as well as the United Nations. We see as important to stress that reconciliation and accountability among Sri Lanka´s diverse communities cannot be achieved through distorting the independence of the judiciary and of the main institutions responsible for the protection of human rights. We remain committed to the Council’s consensus resolution 30/1 and call upon the Government to reconsider cooperating with the Council in this regard. The space for a constructive dialogue should remain open. At the same time, we encourage the OHCHR to continue close cooperation and assistance to the Government of Sri Lanka in order to ensure that important gains made in the past years will be preserved.

We share your concern over the continued repression against political opponents, journalists and civil society in **Nicaragua**. The dire human rights situation in the country underlines the need for a continued monitoring and reporting mandate for the OHCHR. Hence, we welcome the initiative of the core group on the resolution addressing this situation during the current session and support the extension of the OHCHR mandate.

On **Eritrea**, we remain deeply concerned about the continued practice of indefinite National Service, sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary detention and forced disappearances. We call upon the government of Eritrea, a member of this Council, to fully respect human rights and the rule of law.

I thank you.