**45th session of the HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**Item 4 – General Debate, 23rd September 2020**

**Statement by the Czech Republic**

Thank you, Madame President,

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the EU statement.

The recent elections in **Belarus** were neither free nor fair. Disproportionate violence deployed by State authorities is unacceptable. We are gravely concerned over the reported harassment and persecution of members of the Coordination Council, renewed arrests of the representatives of civil society and participants of peaceful protests. We call on Belarusian political leadership to initiate a genuine and inclusive dialogue with the civil society and to release all activists and journalists detained ahead and aftermath the falsified presidential elections, such as Ihar Losik, Andrei Yahorau, Stanislava Husakova, Irina Sukhiy.

The space for civil society in **Russia** is closing. The 'Foreign agents' and 'Undesirable organizations' legislation have set serious limits on the ability of NGOs to operate, and have serious impact on freedom of expression. The recent sentencing of Yuri Dmitriev or Andrey Zukov is the latest manifestation of the pressure on human rights defenders /historians. Furthermore, we condemn the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny. The Russian government must do its utmost to investigate this crime in full transparency. We reiterate our concerns at the deteriorating human rights situation in the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

We call on **China** to halt violations and abuses of human rights, be it in Xinjiang or Tibet. In this regard, we call again for the increased role of the Office of the High Commissioner and unhindered access for Special Procedures. We are concerned over the growing restrictions on access to information. We regret to reiterate our call for the immediate release of human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists and academics such as Yu Wensheng, Tiyip Tashpolat, Ilham Tohti, Huang Qi, Chen Qiushi, Xu Zhiyong or Liu Yanli**.** The situation after intoducing the national security legislation for **Hong Kong** is a matter of grave concern for us. We are particularly worried about its serious impact on rights and freedoms. We are equally concerned over the announced postponement of the elections to the legislative council.

Gross violations of human rights in **Venezuela** continue. Perpetrators of those crimes should be brought to justice. We condemn ongoing harassment against human rights defenders, independent media and trade unions. We urge Venezuelan regime to ensure basic conditions for free and fair electoral process. We call on the Venezuelan regime to release all arbitrarily detained and to end inhumane prison conditions.

In **Iran**, we are gravely concerned by the widespread patterns of serious human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture, breaches of the right to a fair trial, against those arrested in connection with nationwide protests in November 2019. We condemn the recent execution of Navid Afkari, involved in anti-government protests in 2018 and allegedly tortured into making a confession. We are worried by extremely broad criminal charges that carry the death penalty – that includes the case of three young men, Amirhossein Moradi, Mohammad Rajabi and Saeed Tamjidi

The recent UNAMI report which highlights a pattern of unnecessary and excessive force, including live ammunition, when dealing with protesters in **Iraq** raises our concerns.

We remain deeply concerned by gross human rights violations in the **DPRK** and developments in **Libya** which have a serious impact on civilians.

With regard to **Myanmar** we refer to our statement in the respective interactive dialogues.