**Human Rights Council**

**Informal conversation with Special Procedure mandate-holders**

**30 April 2020**

**Intervention by the Czech Republic**

Thank you, Madame President.

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the EU.

We welcome the opportunity to join this informal conversation and thank the Special Procedures Coordination Committee representatives Anita Ramasastry and Dainius Puras for their updates.

Madame President, the world is facing an unprecedented crisis. As the UN Secretary General Antonio Gueterres stated recently, the COVID-19 pandemic is far more than public health emergency. It is therefore vital that our response to this crisis is based on a human rights approach.

Hence, we welcome and appreciate the active role of all Human Rights Council special procedures mandate holders who have been active in making statements on variety of issues within their expertise. They have been giving guidance for states and bringing to our attention the situation of vulnerable groups that urgently need our support. We encourage the mandate holders to continue providing this useful analysis and recommendations within their mandates. For instance, the ten key principles identified by the Special rapporteur on Freedoms of Association and Assembly provide a highly useful guidance.

The principles include the right of civil society actors, including journalists, media workers and human rights defenders to freely seek, receive and impart information. In this context we also appreciate the joint appeal by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the OSCE Media Representative on Freedom of the Media and the IACHR Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression to respect and protect access to accurate and timely information offline as well as online. This Sunday, we will celebrate the World Press Freedom Day. Unfortunately, some journalists will spend it in detention for their reporting on the COVID-19 situation, others have disappeared without a trace and remain unaccounted for to this day. We strongly urge authorities to ensure safe and enabling environment to media workers and civil society representatives. Their work helps us to stop the spread of COVID-19, to fight against the unacceptable infodemic and to ensure everyone’s right to participate.

Madame President, the current situation presents a serious challenge to the full realization of all rights and freedoms. In the Czech Republic too, we had to rethink our possibilities. Let me echo the UN Secretary General once again: *We are all in this together*. To effectively combat the pandemic, we all need to be part of the response. Equal participation of everyone in the response is vital. This requires people to be informed, involved in decisions that affect them and governments to be open, transparent and responsive.

In closing, we would like to pose a question to the distinguished representatives of the Special Procedures Coordination Committee.

*How can the Human Rights Counci be helpful in ensuring a meaningful follow-up to your recommendations?*

The Czech Republic is looking forward to “building back better” together with you.

I thank you.