

**25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council**  
**Panel discussion on the importance of the promotion and protection of**  
**civil society space, 11 March 2014**

**Intervention by the Czech Republic**

Mr. President,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union.

The Czech Republic appreciates today's opportunity to discuss here the issue of promotion and protection of the civil society space. We welcomed the adoption of the respective resolution at the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council, since we considered the issue as very topical and because we deem civil society indispensable for any genuine attempt to ensure and sustain human rights for all. Furthermore, we were urging all states to take appropriate measures to ensure that every member of civil society has an effective right and opportunity to participate in political and public affairs on an equal basis in resolution on equal political participation adopted at the same session last year. Despite these and many other initiatives underlining the importance of a wide civil society space for the realization of human rights, we are still witnessing attempts to restrict civil society activities and narrow down the space in which it operates.

My delegation would like to stress once again that civil society represents an irreplaceable element of checks and balances of any state aspiring to be democratic and free. The system of checks and balances is considered by many scholars as more important than the attained level of democracy as history teaches us that even a democratically elected authority might sooner or later veer towards abuse of power.

Having said that, we would like to ask the distinguished panelists to elaborate on *what can be done to encourage states to accept and actively support this important checks-and-balances role of civil society?*

We are well aware that civil society might be weakened following a long period of authoritarian rule and systematic disrespect for and violations of human rights. It takes some time – and this time might be even unexpectedly long – to wake civil society up, to bring it to life again. For this purpose, the Czech Republic disposes of a special policy instrument at the governmental level called "Transition Promotion Programme", which is a separate but complementary instrument to development assistance and which aims at the promotion of democracy and human rights. There is a number of projects every year designed to build the capacities of civil society in certain countries in the world supported from this programme and carried out by Czech NGOs.

Mr. President, we are looking forward to learn about other experiences and best practices in this respect.

Thank you.