



CZECH REPUBLIC

Statement by

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Madame Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is an honour and privilege to address this session of the Commission on the Status of Women on behalf of the Czech Republic on the occasion of celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Aligning with the Latvian statement on behalf of the European Union, I reassert the commitment of the Czech government to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and promotion of gender equality.

The adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 was a historic accomplishment mobilizing the world to accelerate the achievement of gender equality. Worldwide, women's rights and gender equality have been incorporated in national legislation and state policies following the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The gap between women and men in employment, education and research has narrowed. The maternal mortality rate has declined significantly. The number of women in politics and at the managerial level is increasing. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has helped to improve the lives of millions of people around the globe. These accomplishments are worth celebrating. However, progress in achieving de facto gender equality still remains rather slow and uneven and more effort is needed to secure human rights and equality for all women and men worldwide.

Since 1998 the Czech Government has annually been adopting a national action plan for gender equality entitled "Priorities and Procedures of the Government in Promoting Gender Equality". In 2001, the Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was established as an advisory body and a basic consultative mechanism of the Czech government with representatives of civil society on gender equality policy. Now the Council has 4 committees and 2 working groups covering a broad spectrum of issues connected to the critical areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

In 2014 the position of minister for human rights and equal opportunities was renewed within the Czech Government followed by an increased focus on gender equality and personal commitment by the minister for human rights and equal opportunities Jiří

Dienstbier. During the last two decades positive progress can be seen in the Czech Republic. Active promotion of gender equality is now one of the priorities of the Czech Government enshrined in its Policy Statement. We are proud that on the eve of the Beijing plus 20 anniversary the Czech Government approved the Strategy for Equality of Women and Men in the Czech Republic for 2014 – 2020 in November last year. It is a first strategic document specifically aimed at gender equality adopted by the Czech Government. The Strategy covers 8 main strategic areas based on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and includes another 5 horizontal priorities such as gender stereotypes, men and gender equality and cooperation with NGOs and other stakeholder. The Strategy provides a general framework for specific measures and policies of the Czech Government for the next 6 years.

Based on the Strategy, an Action Plan for the Prevention of Domestic and Gender-based Violence for the Years 2015 – 2018 was approved by the Czech Government in February 2015. By the end of March 2015 an Action Plan for Balanced Representation of Women and Men in Decision-making Positions is expected to be submitted to the Government. Last year we also developed a methodology for gender impact assessment for public authorities and we are planning to improve the system of gender segregated data collection. Furthermore, by the end of 2015 we plan to undertake an awareness raising campaign funded by the Norway grants focusing on gender equality and gender based violence prevention.

Gender mainstreaming belongs to the cross-cutting principles reflected in the Czech development cooperation. We make efforts for its application in programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development projects focused on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In the last years, the Czech Republic implemented in cooperation with non-governmental organisations a number of projects focused on improvement of girls' and women's education in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Senegal or Sudan. Projects also contributed to improve health care for women in Georgia, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Namibia, Senegal or Zambia. In addition, the Czech development policy has supported economic empowerment of women or prevention of gender-based violence.

To sum up, the Czech Government has recently undertaken a number of specific and ambitious measures to improve gender equality in our country and to secure effective implementation of gender mainstreaming. However, a number of challenges still remain ahead of us. Women in the Czech Republic earn more than 20% less than men, continue to be under-represented in politics and decision-making positions, face lack of child-care facilities and become victims of gender-based violence. The Czech Government is aware of these remaining gaps and plans to continue in its efforts to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women. Furthermore, we will continue to focus on women facing multiple discrimination or disadvantages. Migrant women, women from minorities or women living outside urban areas deserve to live in a society based on gender equality and participate equally in public life.

Madame Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

The correlation between gender equality and economic, social and environmental development is clear. Gender mainstreaming brings more effective public policies taking into account the needs of the whole society. For this reason gender equality is not only a question of human rights. It is a question of social justice, democracy and development.

Today, 20 years after the 4th World conference on Women, we need to utilize this year to be a momentous year for gender equality. We need to mobilize both women and men to actively participate in building a more equal and just society worldwide. We need to urge our governments to take concrete and complex measures to eliminate the remaining inequalities and to fully implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Equality for women is equality for mankind.

Madame Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Let me reassure you of the Czech Republic's commitment to protect women's rights and promote gender equality. We shall use our best efforts to tackle the remaining obstacles in our way to a society guaranteeing equality of women and men. In conclusion, allow me to invite you to our side-event dedicated to the participation of minority women in public decision making. The side-event starts on Thursday at a quarter past one.