

CZECH REPUBLIC

Statement by

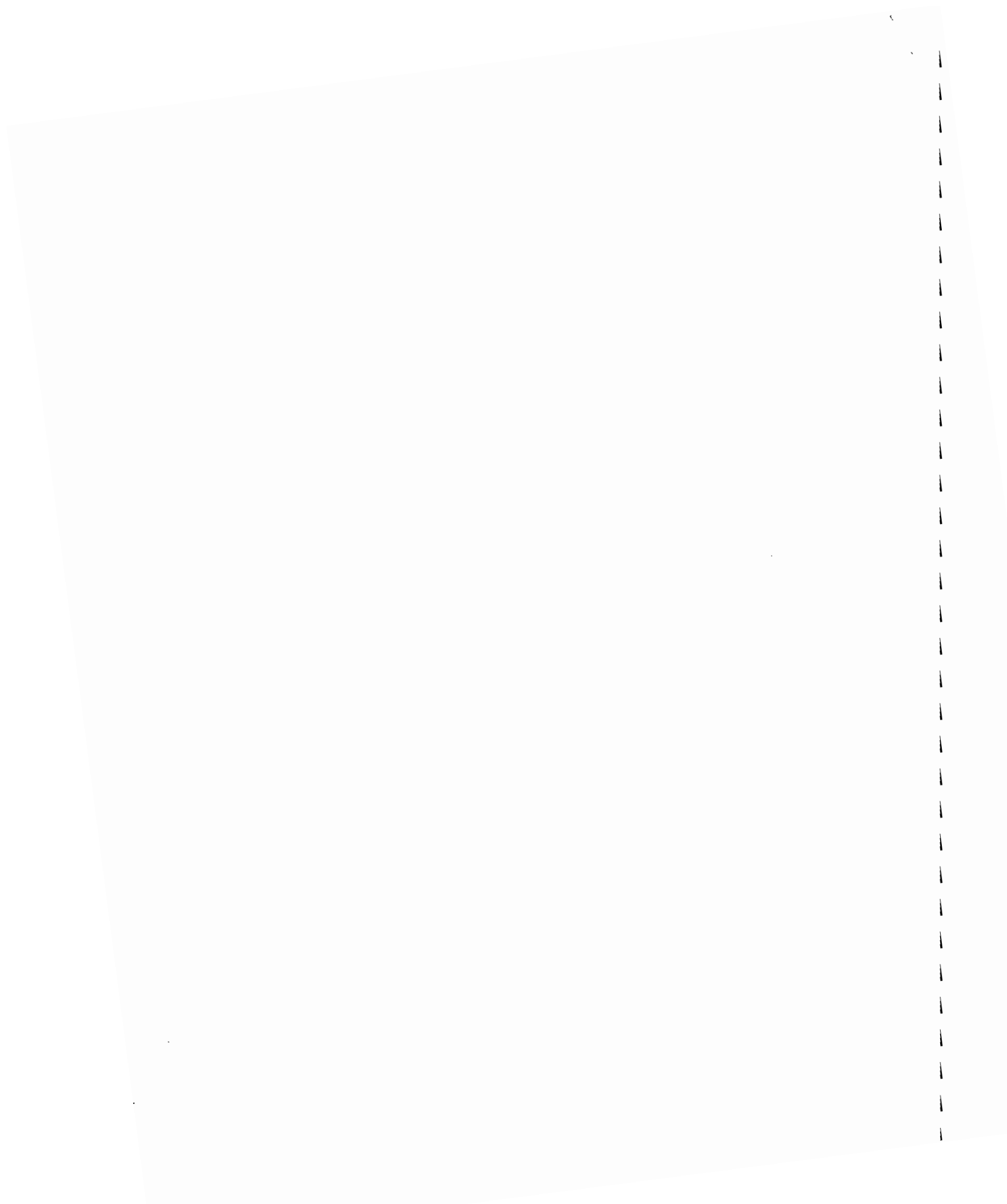
H.E. Mr. Václav KLAUS

President of the Czech Republic

**at the General Debate of the 66th Session
of the General Assembly of the United Nations**

New York, 23 September 2011

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to congratulate you on your election to the very important post of the highest representative of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

A few days ago, the New York City and the entire world remembered the 10th anniversary of the tragic events of September 11. I would like to use this opportunity to pay homage to all the victims, as well as to the firefighters and other rescue workers who died in connection with the 2001 attacks. We should not forget them.

The main topic suggested for the 66th session – **the mediation of disputes by peaceful means** – is at the very core of the United Nations Charter and I can assure you it is also at the core of the foreign policy principles of the country I have the privilege to represent, the Czech Republic.

Nineteen years ago, the dissolution of Czechoslovakia was negotiated peacefully from inside – without any need for external mediation. Our experience tells us that if a solution to any country's aspirations for sovereignty and freedom or to a dispute among countries is to be lasting and acceptable for the citizens of these countries, **the solution must primarily come from within the region itself and from the negotiations of the countries concerned.**

In the same spirit, the Czech Republic is – as regards the most important issue of this session of the United Nations General Assembly – convinced that it is necessary for the two sides of **the Israeli-Palestinian dispute** themselves to find a way forward. I agree with President Obama in that there is no shortcut to the end of a conflict that has endured for decades. It requires both sides to take an innovative approach and overcome some old inflexible and rigid schemes of thought. It requires both sides to negotiate and to find a balanced solution which would last. Such solution cannot come through unilateral steps, neither those forced by the UN, nor the steps taken by one side of the dispute only.

The Czech Republic successfully completed transition from communism to democracy and based on that experience we wish the countries of **North Africa** to make progress in the same direction. We know it is an uneasy path. **To remove several leading politicians is not the crucial moment of the much needed systemic change.** When the Iron curtain in Europe fell, more than twenty years ago, I used to talk about three mutually interconnected preconditions for successful transformation: to have a clear and transparent concept of where to go, to have a feasible strategy how to get there, and to be able to motivate the citizens of the country to promote it. I still do not see these preconditions in some of the countries of Northern Africa. By saying that I want to stress that the systemic change cannot be agreed upon or pre-arranged at international conferences, and that it cannot be mediated or passively “acquired” as a foreign investment. It is a domestic task and it is a sequence of policies, not a once-for-all policy change.

There is something we can do, however. We can and should increase our efforts to cooperate with the countries of North Africa. We should not forget that there is a complementarity between freedom and trade. Our – and now I speak especially about us, the EU-member states – relations with the countries of North Africa should be based on free

trade, which means on trade with minimum of regulation and arbitrary standards. Prosperity in the countries of North Africa is a guarantee of stability and it is also a pre-condition for preventing growing migration to the countries in Southern and Western Europe.

I would also like to mention another issue I see crucial, that of **nuclear energy**. I welcome the fact that the UN Secretary General called for a special meeting on this topic. The Czech Republic pays the highest possible attention to nuclear safety and security, and supports the further development of nuclear energy. What happened in Japan in March this year was a serious natural catastrophe and there are certainly lessons to be learned from it. The main lesson is obvious. Even coastal locations which are seen as seismically stable for urban planning can be affected by earthquakes far away under the sea and the nuclear power plants should be built in the locations which are the least prone to be damaged by natural disasters.

Yet, after the tsunami wave hit the Fukushima power plant, some governments decided not to build new nuclear power plants and some even to abandon nuclear energy as such. Speaking for the Czech Republic, we consider that what happened in Fukushima did not – by any means – question the arguments for nuclear energy. These arguments are strong, economically rational and convincing. Nuclear power is a stable, legitimate, and – in some countries – irreplaceable source of energy today.

Let me conclude by saying, Mr. Chairman, that the Czech Republic continues to support the much needed reform of the Security Council. The world has changed considerably since the time the UN Charter was signed. New countries must take a higher responsibility for this organization and for its financing.

This year, the Czech Republic holds the presidency in the Executive Board of the UN Development Programme which supports projects in 177 countries of the world. We support this programme but want to stress that in order for the developing countries to develop, all kinds of unnecessary barriers, standards, regulations and other constraints in the developed world have to be removed first.

The Czech Republic also supports the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda and the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

I wish you, Mr. Chairman, every success in your office, and would like to assure you that the Czech Republic will continue to be an active member of the United Nations.