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Statement by

H.E. Mr. Jiří Rusnok

Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

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1109 – 1111 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10028
tel.: 1-(646)-981-4000, fax: 1-(646)-981-4099, www.mfa.cz/un.newyork

Mr. President,

May I first congratulate you on your election as President of the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

This Assembly meets at a time marked by **significant challenges**. Let me mention a few, which I regard as the most pressing:

- **The state** of the world economy **remains fragile**, but slowly we seem to be entering a path towards a steady economic recovery and growth.
- **The security situation** in many parts of the world **is improving**, but we are witnessing many local conflicts which endanger the overall regional balance. The conflict in Syria must come to an end based on politically negotiated settlement.
- The **danger of a nuclear conflict is diminishing** thanks to the decreasing number of nuclear warheads and carriers in the possession of the nuclear powers. Yet the currently blocked negotiations with the Non Proliferation Treaty Parties should be a matter of concern.
- **Fundamental human rights and freedoms are still at risk in many countries.**
- **The gap between the rich and the poor is ever widening** despite many efforts to alleviate world hunger and poverty. At the same time, some countries have managed to reduce this gap.

International cooperation is essential if we want to address these and other challenges. The United Nations remains the most suitable body to pool global efforts and resources needed for this task. The world is changing and so its traditional platform must adapt as well. **From the start, we should** formulate realistic plans and procedures. However, their implementation will not be possible without the necessary political will.

Mr. President,

A country's reputation does not depend only on its size or economic output, but also on its readiness to actively engage in addressing and solving the challenges of the current globalized world. **The Czech Republic as a country with historical experience of an undemocratic regime is ready to share its experience from its democratic transition process**, as well as to offer its help, resources and know-how to countries undergoing their democratic transition.

This year will mark **a turning point for European economies**. The Czech economy is very much dependent on international trade and **I strongly believe that free and fair trade is one of the best tools how to improve the world economic situation**. The multilateral approach in trade issues should be revitalized and the cooperation within the WTO should be reinforced. I sincerely wish much success to the new WTO leadership.

Mr. President,

The United Nations has always played a key role **in defusing armed conflicts between and within the Member States**. Its role in helping to resolve the conflict in Syria is crucial. The confirmed **use of chemical weapons** in Syria is deeply worrying. Any **use of chemical weapons is unacceptable**. Whoever gave the order to initiate the chemical attack has gravely violated the principle of responsibility to protect the civilian population.

This constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity and its perpetrators should be held accountable before the International Criminal Court.

The Czech Republic welcomes the decision of the Executive Council of the OPCW on the expeditious destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons, which is now being adopted in the Hague, and looks forward to the adoption of the UN Security Council resolution on this issue in the next hours.

The conflict does not have a military solution, only politically negotiated settlement will reinstall peace in Syria. The Czech Republic calls on all parties and especially on the Syrian government to fully implement the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. The Czech Republic is supporting and will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross to relieve the growing humanitarian needs in Syria and in the neighbouring countries.

The Czech Republic **acknowledges developments in the transformation process of Myanmar**. I strongly encourage the country's leaders in accordance with their public pronouncements to actively pursue the process of amending the national constitution in order to improve democratic standards in the country.

As I mentioned earlier, the role of the UN in resolving the armed conflicts is indispensable. **UN peacekeeping operations are an important tool** for sustainable and durable solutions to violent conflict worldwide. Having participated in UN operations in recent years in relatively small numbers, the Czech Republic is ready to substantially increase the presence of its military personnel in peacekeeping operations.

Mr President,

The Czech Republic as a non-nuclear weapon state has always strongly advocated for **the right to develop, research and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination**. Nevertheless, this right should be fully exercised only in conjunction with honouring all non-proliferation obligations.

The longstanding objective of a **complete elimination of nuclear weapons** may be achieved only if the **non-proliferation regime meets all demands for its strengthening**.

The upcoming meeting of the Group of the Governmental Experts on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty will be a step in the right direction.

The Czech Republic highly appreciates that the international community was finally able to **complete the negotiations of the Arms Trade Treaty**.

Mr. President,

Let me share with you my view of the role of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Czech Republic has been actively involved from the very beginning in the discussions on formulation of the new development agenda. And we are ready and committed to take part in its implementation.

As formulated by the UN Secretary General in his recent report, the MDGs have been the most

successful global anti-poverty push in history and have made a great contribution:

- to raising public awareness,
- increasing political will and
- mobilising resources.

Some of the MDGs targets have been met already, some are within close reach. But the results are uneven among and within countries and there is a lot of **unfinished business**. I can assure you that **my government remains committed to MDGs**, which is reflected both in our policies as well as in our practical actions.

The future development agenda should build on MDGs success and bring together diverse development actors. I would like to support the **single overarching post-2015 framework**, which will **link eradication of poverty in all its dimensions and the promotion of sustainable development**.

Therefore, I call for full integration of all relevant international processes, which have been separated until now, particularly the Review of the MDGs and the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

We have to make sure that the future goals will be **universal for all countries**, but at the same time remain **realistic**, taking into account the actual possibilities of each country. They must be **achievable and measurable**.

I appreciate that the report by the High Level panel puts emphasis on inclusive growth and considers the role of innovations, technology and the private sector actors. The proposed **development goal to secure sustainable energy** is a very good example and should figure among the future development priorities.

Mr. President,

In December **the international community will commemorate the 65th anniversary** of the adoption of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. The situation of human rights has improved in some areas, new human rights challenges have emerged. A lot of work still lies ahead of us. The Czech Republic, member of the Human Rights Council, country of Václav Havel, will always defend human rights wherever they are violated.

In conclusion, allow me, Mr. President, to focus on the issue related to the UN reform process. **The Czech Republic appreciates the dedicated work of the UN Secretary General**, which is transforming the UN into a more effective and accountable system. Unfortunately, there are not enough means to fund all initiatives. **We all have to do more, with less**. I am sure that we will find internal reserves, which will allow the UN to face with a greater success those tasks entrusted to us. By performing well and by being responsive to its member states, the UN will strengthen the political will of its members to invest in multilateral fora and thus contribute to a safer world.

Thank you for your kind attention.