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Statement by

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Mr President, Mr Secretary-General, Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two weeks ago, we were commemorating the **20th anniversary of the horrendous terrorist attacks** against the United States. But this barbaric act of terrorism was not only directed against the US but also against our shared values. This crime will always serve as a powerful reminder that we must stand united in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism in all their forms.

The **threat of international terrorism** has unfortunately not diminished. Terrorist and violent extremist groups have demonstrated their ability to adjust to the new circumstances, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our **vigilance** is therefore needed more than ever.

The adoption of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review last June gives us an opportunity to **adapt and improve the tools** required to effectively address this global scourge.

The turbulent situation in **Afghanistan** poses a major challenge. It is now important to join forces to avert a **humanitarian catastrophe**; to continue our fight against terrorism and organized crime; and to prevent forced displacement and illegal migration.

At the **donor conference in Geneva** the Czech Republic pledged to increase its humanitarian support for the people in need in Afghanistan. Our contribution will amount to some 5 million US Dollars.

The **UN** remains a **key actor** on the ground. The Taliban must ensure an unhindered and safe **access to the entire territory** of the country for all humanitarian and UN staff, including all female staff.

The Czech Republic strongly condemns the **use of violence and intimidation** against protesters, journalists and human rights defenders. We are particularly concerned by actions of the Taliban directed against women and girls.

Another region where the population has been badly tested is **the Sahel**. Together with our international and African partners, the Czech Republic will continue to take

part in **joint** stabilization activities to bring peace and prosperity to that part of the continent.

Africa deserves peace, prosperity and stability!

We have been implementing a national programme with the annual budget of over 14 million US Dollars which **supports African countries** coping with forced displacement and with irregular migration.

Mr President,

The **COVID-19 pandemic** has had a devastating impact on individuals, societies and economies. It has shown us how intertwined global challenges are. It has also highlighted the importance of international cooperation, information sharing and communication among all actors as well as compliance with international obligations.

The **World Health Organisation** has a special role in strengthening health systems and preparedness for pandemics. It has a unique mandate in the field of global public health. It must be able to work effectively, efficiently and independently of any political or other influence.

The ongoing **reform process** in the WHO should reflect the recommendations of evaluation bodies and feed into the notion of value-for-money. We must learn our lessons and act in solidarity to leave no one behind.

As part of Team Europe, my country will have donated **more than 2 million doses of vaccines** by the end of 2021, mostly through the **COVAX facility**.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We can **build back better and greener** if we connect our immediate pandemic response with prevention and resilience building.

The **2030 Agenda** for Sustainable Development and the **Paris Agreement** on Climate Change constitute the centrepiece of our joint efforts. The nexus of humanitarian, development and peace activities has proved efficient.

Earlier this year my country has successfully presented its **second Voluntary National Review in the UN**. We support our partners in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda through projects of bilateral and multilateral development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and transformation policy.

As regards the global **climate action**, the COP 26 in Glasgow will be crucial and our nationally determined contributions need to be ambitious. We also need all major emitters on board.

The impacts of **climate change on peace and security** are becoming increasingly apparent. A systematic integration of these risks into the UN Security Council's work is necessary.

Unfortunately the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated negative trends in the protection of **human rights** worldwide. More than ever, we need to ensure respect for **civic participation, the independent media and civil society**

Mr. President,

The increasing importance of **cyberspace** to our everyday lives and our economic resilience cannot be overstated these days. Preserving a globally accessible, free, and secure cyberspace is essential. However, the pandemic has also exposed deep digital divides.

We are appalled by the increase of **cyber-attacks against critical infrastructure** delivering essential services to our citizens, including hospitals, water treatment facilities, power plants, and even our democratic institutions. Such acts can cause grave suffering to civilians, including the loss of lives.

Deliberate spreading of **disinformation** has a direct impact on health and safety of our citizens and their trust in institutions. Using disinformation as a means of aggression against other states is utterly unacceptable.

The geopolitics of technology continues to pose an ever-greater challenge to **the established norms**. We must all work together to ensure that new digital

technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, **remain an enabler** of human progress rather than a tool for surveillance, oppression and control.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Protection and promotion of human rights is a cornerstone of the Czech foreign policy. We support the mandate and the vital work of **the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**. We **echo** the Secretary General's Call to Action for Human Rights and we agree that an **adequate funding** of the UN human rights pillar from the UN regular budget **must be secured**.

Similarly, striving to improve the rights of women and girls must be at the heart of our response to the pandemic. The Czech Republic fully supports the **Women, Peace and Security agenda** and we proceed with the implementation of our Second National Action Plan along with civil society and academia.

Furthermore, the Czech Republic firmly supports **international criminal justice** and, in particular, the International Criminal Court. We would also like to express our support for the start of negotiations on the convention on crimes against humanity.

Let me underscore one strand of hatred as especially despicable: the **rising antisemitism and the Holocaust denial**. The Czech Republic is committed to preventing and combating antisemitism both offline and online. In 2022, we will host a follow-up International Conference to the Terezín Declaration endorsed by 47 countries. Our ambition is to achieve progress in rectifying property injustices from the time of the Holocaust and to create funds for education about and fighting against antisemitism, xenophobia and hatred.

Mr President,

The Czech Republic is concerned by the continuous massive repression in **Belarus** which has created a climate of fear in general public. We call for immediate release of

all those unlawfully detained for exercising their rights to freedom of expression or peaceful assembly, including journalists, human rights defenders and activists. Independent and transparent investigation into all these violations is essential.

The Czech Republic is a firm supporter of the **rules-based international order** with the UN at its core, upholding international law and compliance with commitments rooted in the UN Charter. In this context let me reiterate the unwavering support of the Czech Republic to the **sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence** of **Ukraine** and **Georgia** within their internationally recognised borders.

In addition, we deplore any state-sponsored malign activities committed in Europe in recent years **as simply unacceptable, illegal and in direct violation of** everything the UN stands for. The Czech Republic has experienced it first-hand.

Turing to Myanmar now, we strongly condemn the military coup in **the country**. We support the legitimately elected leaders and we call for respect of the results of the November 2020 parliamentary elections.

Mr President,

Let me now focus on the **situation in the Middle East**. Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza bear the primary responsibility for the outbreak of violence and the tragic developments in May 2021. Their large-scale rocket attacks targeted Israeli civilians. Let me reiterate that Israel has every **right to defend its citizens against terror**.

The Czech Republic supports **any meaningful initiative** leading to an end to this cycle of violence and remains firmly committed to the **two-state solution**. Resuming direct talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians is desirable, as are all confidence-building measures aiming at bringing the two sides to the negotiating table.

In the Human Rights Council, the Czech Republic voted against the establishment of an ongoing **Commission of Inquiry** with a rather vaguely defined geographical scope. **Israel**, a democratic country with an independent legal system, has appropriate means to effectively confront and address human rights violations.

Iran's continued escalation of nuclear activities far beyond its commitments **coupled with** the suspension of the implementation of transparency measures under

the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action raises serious concerns. All these actions impede the execution of the IAEA's verification and monitoring mandate.

Mr President,

We all are committed to ensuring a safer and more stable world for our citizens and a sustainable inclusive global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Complex global challenges can only be addressed by **effective multilateral governance and rules-based international cooperation**.

Such an approach, I believe, can also be useful in reducing simmering geopolitical tensions in the Indo-Pacific. We **observe** this worrying trend with great apprehension.

In order to tackle the pressing global issues, the international community needs the UN to be **fit for purpose**. We welcome the Secretary General's recent report "**Our Common Agenda**". **Engaging a broad array of stakeholders**, including young people, civil society and think-tanks will provide fresh energy for change.

In conclusion, **I fully agree with** the UN Secretary General that humanity has proven time and again that it is capable of **achieving** great things when we put our differences aside and **work together for a common purpose**. This is the spirit of our United Nations.

Thank you.