



CZECH REPUBLIC

Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations

77th Session of the General Assembly

7th plenary meeting-General Debate

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Jan Lipavský

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

New York, 21 September, 2022

Check against Delivery

One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, 48th floor
885 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017
tel.: +1 (646) 981 4001, fax: +1 (646) 981 4099
www.mzv.cz/un.newyork

Mr President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This **United Nations**, its principles, which we established after the Second World War, is **in grave danger**.

One of the presumed gatekeepers of the UN Charter, one of the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, Russia, is attacking a sovereign neighbouring democracy and wreaking havoc in Eastern Europe and the entire world.

If we continue to allow a new colonial war, then **why are we here?** Why do we keep this United Nations alive? **Do we care or are we indifferent?**

Czech government's foreign policy is guided by the legacy of our former President Václav Havel. A globally respected human rights defender and a renowned politician, who once said:

*“Our indifference towards others can after all result in only one thing: the **indifference** of others towards us.”*

The fact that representatives of all UN member states are meeting here to address major global challenges manifests that we are **not indifferent** to the suffering of others.

It shows that **we care**.

The circumstances have changed dramatically since our last meeting though.

The Russian invasion in Ukraine has fundamentally shaken the international order. On February 24, not only Europe but the whole world entered a **new era**.

Russia tries to dismantle the security architecture of the European continent, launching a colonial war of conquest. Ironically, President Putin declares partial mobilization and threatens the world with use of nuclear weapons today, on the UN International Day of Peace. What more proof do we need? This is our **new terrifying reality**.

Russia's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine does not only blatantly violate the UN Charter. It badly damages **global economy and food security** of many countries gathered in this hall. It seriously threatens the rules-based international order. It harms all UN member states.

I am shocked to the core listening to the Russian state controlled TV channels preaching the **strategy of hunger and cold** towards Ukraine and the world. Approving the torture and mass killings of civilians with the argument **that the world has to fear Russia**.

Russia **must immediately cease** its military actions and withdraw all its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine. Russia's **complete disregard** for the resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly is appalling.

Czechia resolutely supports Ukraine's **right** to defend its territorial integrity and population in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter.

Czechia fully supports **sovereignty, unity and independence** of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We will never recognize the **illegal annexation** of Crimea. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the upcoming **sham referenda** in parts of the Ukrainian territory.

We resolutely **reject any attempts to create spheres of influence** instead of equal partnerships. The time of establishing **colonies** and acquiring territories by sheer force of arms is over!

Today, it is Ukraine. Tomorrow, it could be any of us.

We refuse this world of Russian colonial appetite.

We are horrified by the **atrocities** committed by the Russian invader. We condemn the existence of "filtration" camps run by Russia and the horrors in Mariupol, Bucha, Irpin, Izyum and many other places in Ukraine as well as the apocalyptic shelling of civilian infrastructure.

Hundreds of thousands of **Ukrainian citizens** were deported to Russia, including **children**. Children forcibly taken away from their parents! It reminds us of the worst practices of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany in the first half of the 20th century.

All these reports on Russian military conduct **must be independently investigated**. Russia must respect its obligations under the international humanitarian law.

There is Russia's **international responsibility for the aggression, but there is also an individual criminal responsibility** – for the crimes committed on such a large scale by Russian troops. We will hold all war criminals accountable.

Czechia supported the referral to the **ICC Prosecutor** to open an investigation of the situation on the ground in Ukraine.

We also strongly support Ukraine's Application instituting the proceedings against the Russian Federation under the Genocide Convention before the **International Court of Justice**.

And, we call for establishment of a **special international tribunal** that will prosecute the crime of aggression committed by Putin's Russia.

Apart from that, we support Ukraine comprehensively. Czechia hosts the highest number of **Ukrainian refugees per capita** - over 400 thousand. We provide volumes of humanitarian aid. We support stabilization, recovery and reconstruction efforts of the Ukrainian government. Not only with words, but with action.

Mr. President,

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has only strengthened my country's resolve to continue supporting **independent media, civil society and human rights defenders**.

Inside Russia, unfortunately, the human rights situation of any freedom-loving citizens has worsened enormously.

We successfully ran for the **Human Rights Council** seat vacated by Russia in May. I would like to thank for the broad support, which we received from many of you.

We warmly welcome the appointment of Mr. Volker Türk as the new **High Commissioner for Human Rights**. I wish to thank the former High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet for her dedicated work during her term in office.

The latest report on China documented by her Office shed light on the alarming human rights violations against Muslim groups, including **Uyghurs**.

Unfortunately, the human rights situations in countries such as **Afghanistan, Cuba, Ethiopia, Iran, Myanmar or Venezuela** also continue to worsen.

We wish for **Myanmar** to work towards a peaceful resolution of the current crisis.

We follow with horror the atrocious manner in which the **Iranian** authorities handle the rightful protests of women.

In **Belarus**, the regime uses brutal violence against its opponents. In the past two years, tens of thousands of Belarussians have been detained, all independent media and civil society organizations destroyed.

We are concerned that **antisemitism and the Holocaust denial** are on the rise. This year marks 80 years since the infamous "Wannsee Conference" with the so-called "Final Solution to the Jewish Question", which resulted in the murder of nearly 6 million Jews.

Czechia reiterates **Israel's right to protect its citizens** against any terrorist activities, including rocket attacks, which deliberately target Israeli civilians.

Mr. President,

Czechia currently holds the **Presidency of the European Union**. Our priorities, such as defending Ukraine, ensuring energy security, and promoting democracy and human rights are not only regional. They are global in nature.

The Russian aggression has only multiplied the already existing **global challenges**. The progress on the **Sustainable Development Goals** and the global **recovery from the Covid-19** pandemic has slowed down. Prices of **agriculture commodities** are growing globally.

For us, working with **youth**, listening to their concerns, is the driving force to get the progress on SDGs back on track.

Climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss are major global challenges. We need a **comprehensive humanitarian-development-peace based response** to crises, including pandemics, and sustainable food systems and climate resilience.

It is our collective responsibility to ensure that **WHO** can work effectively and independently of any political influence. No one should be left behind. We firmly support the global efforts for **equal access to vaccines and treatment**.

Stakes are high as the next **UN Climate Conference COP27** in Egypt is approaching.

It has been said many times before, but I will reiterate once again: **If we do not act now, it might soon be too late!**

The development of relations between the **EU and Africa** is among the priorities of the Czech EU Presidency. Africa is facing food shortages and negative impacts of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Russian aggression against Ukraine has blocked **exports of agricultural products**.

I cannot but express my outrage at how Russian disinformation propaganda is trying to use the food crisis in Africa to spread false narratives that the EU sanctions against Russia caused the shortage. Obviously, **if Russia had not invaded Ukraine, we would not have had to deal with this issue at all!**

Mr. President,

Turning to other security issues, we are concerned about the increased **tensions in the Taiwan Strait** caused by unilateral threatening actions. We expect cross-strait differences to be resolved by peaceful means, while the status quo is being maintained.

The **digital space** carries many opportunities but there are risks entailed, too: cyber-attacks and cybercrime, misuse of technology and, in particular, disinformation.

Let me say this loud and clear – **a lie is not an opinion**. For far too long, we have overlooked the spread of **disinformation** directed against our common values.

Let us not forget the **Covid-related disinformation**. We had to learn the hard way when disinformation began to cost human lives.

This is why we need to make sure our **citizens and societies are resilient**, and independent media operate freely. We will continue to reach out and help countries exposed to lies and propaganda.

Czechia promotes the concept of “**digital humanism**” which keeps human interests and needs at the center of emerging technologies.

Instances of internet shutdowns are growing. We must maintain a **free, open, safe, secure, and stable cyberspace** where human rights apply online as they do offline.

The number of **cyber-attacks**, including state-sponsored ones, continues to rise, as does their severity. New potential of terrorist threat has appeared with the escalation of Russia’s aggressive policies.

Terrorism maliciously feeds on weak governance, economic hardship and social injustice, with the Sahel region being struck the most.

Czechia reiterates its **commitment to countering terrorism and supporting countries** that suffer from terrorist violence or threat.

I would like to use this opportunity **to remind Russia** that Czechia still awaits its official response concerning the explosion in the **ammunition depot in my country** in 2014. This completely appalling act was planned and executed by agents of the Russian military intelligence GRU and claimed the lives of two innocent Czech citizens, in addition to material damage. Such conduct is a clear violation of international law.

Mr President,

Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is also negatively impacted by Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Russia does not hesitate to use dangerous nuclear rhetoric, which became a new standard of terrorizing peaceful populations.

Czechia resolutely decries **Russia's occupation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant**. Any armed attack on nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful purposes constitutes a violation of the UN Charter and the Statute of the IAEA.

We regret that despite lengthy negotiations, it was not possible to achieve consensus on a final outcome document of the **10th NPT Review Conference** because Russia opposed.

And, we call on **Iran** to act urgently to fulfil its legal obligations under its NPT Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and clarify all outstanding issues. We commend the IAEA and its Director General for their professional work in verifying Iran's safeguards obligations.

Mr President,

This United Nations, this universal organization, has a duty to help us better react to existing and emerging global challenges. But, in these dark and stormy times, it has the duty to firmly defend the principles it was founded on, the UN Charter, human rights and rules-based international order.

I thank you.