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Statement by

H.E. Mr. Petr Pavel

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Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and a humbling experience to address this distinguished audience for the first time.

This forum carries great responsibility for the shape of humanity's future. First and foremost, I see my address as an opportunity to present a vision of how we can co-exist and co-operate as nations and global citizens.

Czechia aims to play a proactive and responsible role within the global community. No one can cope with current global challenges alone.

That is why we strongly support the reforms proposed by the UN Secretary-General in 'Our Common Agenda'. We want to work together on a more effective and inclusive multilateral system that is able to address the needs we face. This is why Czechia announced its candidacy for non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the term 2032-33.

Last year, a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, one of the founding nations of this organization, blatantly violated the fundamental principles the UN stands upon.

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine continues to constitute a manifest violation of the UN Charter and international law we all subscribed to.

My country has its own experience with wars and interventions, including decades' long military occupation imposed by Moscow. It taught us what it means when "might makes right".

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has come at an even higher cost. I personally visited Ukraine in April. My wife had the opportunity to visit the war-torn country only two weeks ago. I saw the infamous crime scenes at Bucha and Borodyanka. I found myself a few miles from the frontline in an area ravaged by fighting.

The account of Russia's atrocities, human rights violations and ferocious attacks against the innocent civilian population is overwhelming. Children forcibly separated from their families, deported for reeducation in order to make them forget their culture and who they are. Entire towns and villages wiped out for no reason. Mass graves and torture chambers in which people just disappear. Sadly, the evidence tells the story better than any statement. And the list of stories full of horror is endless.

This must end. Russia must unconditionally withdraw all troops from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Russia's leaders must be held accountable for the crime of aggression against its neighbor. This is why we have extended our support to the establishment of a special tribunal to prosecute the crime of aggression against Ukraine.

It is our duty to ensure that those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity are held accountable.

Apart from violence, injustice and suffering of civilians, every war also brings destruction. Reconstruction of Ukraine may be the largest rebuilding effort in modern history. We support establishing the Register of Damage caused by Russian military and we call on all states to join these efforts.

Czechia will support Ukraine in its just defense as long as necessary. From Day 1, we have stood by Ukraine's side and provided the defenders with weapons and ammunition.

For over 18 months, Czechia has continued to provide humanitarian assistance to the war-affected Ukrainian population. Per capita, my country has received more Ukrainian refugees, than anybody else. Mostly women and children.

With the outburst of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, Czechia has stepped up its support for Russian and Belorussian pro-democratic voices and Prague has become an important hub for journalists and human rights defenders in need.

What Ukrainian people truly deserve is peace. Not just any end of hostilities but a just and durable peace. If it is to be sustainable, it cannot be based on an unjust compromise or conditions imposed by the conqueror. Neither shall it leave hopes for Russia to fulfil its imperial ambitions. It must be peace on terms of the defender. Not the aggressor and even not anybody else.

Don't forget: the damaging impacts of Russia's aggression are felt across the world. Russia's blockade of Ukrainian ports and destruction of infrastructure continues to weaponize global food security in the most reckless and cynical way.

Let me be very clear. Ukraine's security is our own security. From Africa, to Europe, to Latin America, to Asia. I call on leaders of the free world to keep the unity and support of Ukraine.

Mr. President,

The threats we face are global and interconnected. Because of Russia and a handful of other countries, our world is more dangerous and rougher. Instead of cultivating cooperative security, we have to build up our militaries. Instead of boosting social cohesion programs and overcoming economic insecurity, we have to boost our defense budgets. Those who contest the international rules steer the wheel of global security backwards, into confrontation, and sooner or later at the expense of all of us.

Russia's reckless threats to use nuclear weapons, its policy of coercion and intimidation represent a threat to balance and integrity of the whole system of non-proliferation. The announced stationing of nuclear weapons in Belarus is a further irresponsible escalation Czechia condemns in the strongest terms. Unfortunately, Russia's fingerprints can be found in many other evolving scenarios...

Mr. President,

The security, humanitarian and political crises unfolding in the Sahel region are more than worrisome. The international community must try to find a way to end the series of military coups and ensure a return to constitutional order.

This is the only way countries can effectively protect themselves against terrorism. It is the only way the much-needed economic and social development – called for by African people - can take place.

The region remains vulnerable to numerous political, economic and climate risks. Its long-term stability, security and prosperity is crucial. We must offer genuine pragmatic partnerships. Some countries pretend to be willing to help. In reality, they create economic and political dependencies. These undermine the long-term stability and manipulate the free will of people by spreading lies and disinformation.

In Asia and Pacific, Czechia is an active and reliable ally and partner. The word “cooperation” must remain key for our joint efforts in the region. We deplore China’s military actions which raise tensions in the Taiwan Strait, and its unfriendly actions against partners in the South China Sea. Any dispute or contagious issue must be solved peacefully. Any potential armed conflict in the region would have negative consequences for the whole world.

In North Korea and Iran, reckless escalation of nuclear or intercontinental ballistic missile activities combined with lack of transparency threaten international and regional security. The same applies to any material support to Russia’s military aggression in Ukraine. It is clear that such supplies only aggravate the suffering of the Ukrainian civilian population.

The Middle East remains among the world’s most volatile regions, troubled by the spread of conflicts, terrorism and sectarian violence. Efforts to normalize relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors bring positive steps towards stability and peace in the region.

Mr. President,

Our efforts to maintain peace and security are closely linked with our ability to promote human well-being and sustainable development of our societies.

One may ask how a country of 10 + million people can contribute to global ambitions.

Having our own national experience with oppression - fundamental rights and freedoms are deeply embedded in our values system and foreign policy. Czechia strives to pursue an active human rights and democracy policy. We are a staunch supporter of international human rights mechanisms. Currently, we are proud to serve as the Presidency of the UN Human Rights Council.

More than ever, we have to support media freedom to enable access to independent and factual information. Without it, disinformation and propaganda can win.

Mr. President,

The Sustainable Development Goals Summit yesterday sent a strong message of urgency and determination. The 2030 Agenda is a promise to current and future generations, which we need to keep.

There is an urgent need to highlight a link between peace, security, and development on one hand, and human rights, justice and strong institutions on the other.

In the latest SDGs Index, my country ranked as the 8th most advanced country in the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs. Yet we also face many challenges and we need to step up our efforts.

Climate change remains the single most destructive threat to the current and future existence and well-being of all humankind since prehistoric times. It threatens our lives, livelihoods, food security, prosperity and ultimately, peace and security worldwide.

It was under Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union last year, we finalized crucial legislation which will show the path towards the green transition of our industry.

Mr. President,

Thirty years after the end of the cold war, we are witnessing efforts of authoritarian regimes to re-define core principles of the multilateral order. Malign actors use cyber space, disinformation, economic, political and other tools to disrupt democratic processes, to undermine our institutions and to weaken our security.

The challenges we face today are significant and it is apparent that only collective action can ensure a safe and prosperous future for all.

On our side, we commit ourselves to work with the international community to fulfil the urgent work that must be done. On a basis of multilateral cooperation, mutual respect and rules-based international order.

Thank you.