

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017

Statement by the Czech Republic

Working Session 4 & 5: Ensuring equal enjoyment of rights and equal participation in political and public life, 13 September 2017

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Mr Chairman,

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and the recommendations made on all the described topics.

Promotion of equal participation in political and public life is a long-term priority of the Czech Republic. We are actively following this issue in bilateral relations and in international organizations as well as through a number of concrete projects done by non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, we support a strong engagement of the European Union in this area, be it through its programme tools as European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights or European Endowment for Democracy.

Our active engagement in the area of participation rights would not be possible and effective without a very close cooperation with NGOs. Let me mention just a few examples. Democracy 2.1, a Czech NGO, focuses on the importance of modern and innovative participation methods concerning for instance budget planning at the municipal level. We welcome the Carter Centre's effort to draw the United Nation's attention closer to the promotion of election rights. We are following with interest the IFES' efforts to set up regional networks to focus on electoral dispute resolution issues.

We are actively following the promotion of participation rights in multilateral fora. In May 2017, the Czech Republic assumed the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. During our Chairmanship we are supporting development of local and regional democracy as one of the core components of democracy. We are focusing on innovative tools that facilitate an effective response by municipalities and regions to today's challenges. Participatory democracy as the

vital basis for citizens' engagement in local and regional public life represents an important theme of our Chairmanship.

In July 2017, the Czech Republic was elected the President of the UN Economic and Social Council. The main priority of our Presidency is "Sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all". Fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda requires collective efforts of every part of our society at the local, regional and global level.

Finally, we would like to provide the OSCE forum with updated information on Czech Republic's activities in the UN Human Rights Council. Since 2013, we have been submitting together with the Netherlands, Botswana, Indonesia and Peru a resolution on "Equal participation in political and public affairs" which has been every year adopted by consensus and supported by the overwhelming majority of OSCE participating States as co-sponsors. In September 2016, the UN Human Rights Council decided to request the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare draft guidelines as a set of orientations for states on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs. We expect the draft guidelines to be presented at the September 2018 Session of the Council. We would like to use this opportunity to thank the OSCE participating States for their support of the UN Human Rights Council's resolution.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.