

It is a great pleasure for me to have once again a chance to praise the EBG Federation for its work and to express my gratitude for its constant efforts to play pivotal role in strengthening and deepening bilateral relations between the European Union and its Member States and India, while raising a strong voice to promote the interests of European companies in India.

The EBG has become an increasingly relevant part of the European Union's team of partner institutions and has emerged as a reliable associate of Member States representations in pursuance of the objectives. It continued in pushing the agenda of strategic partnership with India to advanced level and expanding the existing potential of further collaboration in many areas such as trade in goods and services, foreign direct investment, entrepreneurship development, research and development, education, skill development and naturally basic people-to-people contacts.

I should congratulate the EBG Federation for handling smoothly and professionally transformation of its structure. I am glad to see that EBG is able to reach out of the Indian Capital City and to develop its network around India with focus on economic centres such as Mumbai and other metropolitan cities. Increasing importance, wide territorial reach and growing membership will only help the EBG Federation in communication and in relation with the Indian authorities.

The voice of the Czech Republic within the EBG Federation is clearly heard in many aspects. I am pleased to note that one of the Czech Republic-based companies, namely Home Credit, is reported to be one of the most active EBG Federation members and that it has contributed its part in every year's Position Paper preparation work. I believe that other Czech companies with commercial presence in India will follow this example.

Let me use this opportunity to express my satisfaction with the development of the bilateral friendly relations between Czechia and India in the year 2017. One of the pillars of this relationship has traditionally been trade. I am pleased to note in this respect that bilateral trade has further increased by 7,9 % to reach 1,46 billion USD. Participation of India as the Partner Country at the International Engineering Fair in Brno in October last year was one of highlights of activities jointly developed by the two countries' Governments to intensify trade and investments ties. It is equally gratifying to note that bilateral people-to-people contacts have continued to expand by way of increased tourism, cultural exchanges and cultural cooperation.

With regards to the new Position Paper I would like to once again congratulate to the EBG Federation for being able to meet their own standards of the highest professionalism and huge amount of effort and to prepare in collaboration with European companies in India another comprehensive assessment of the regulatory framework and description of conditions for doing business in India.

H.E Mr Milan Hovorka

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Czech Republic to India