



CZECH REPUBLIC

Statement by

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at the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women

United Nations Headquarters

New York, 11 March 2019

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Madam Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is an honour and privilege to address this session of the Commission on the Status of Women on behalf of the Czech Republic. Aligning ourselves with the statement made by Romania on behalf of the European Union, we re-assert the commitment of the Czech Government to the promotion of women's rights and gender equality.

Two years ago, I had the chance to participate at the CSW session for the very first time as the director of the Family Policy Department at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic. I was impressed by the energy and determination of thousands of people from different parts of the world to advance equality of women and men. Now, two years later, I come back as a minister supposedly endowed with the power to improve the lives of women, men and their families. Promoting gender equality is not only one of the priorities of the Czech Republic but also my personal commitment.

The Czech Republic has made great progress in recent years. Women now represent the majority of university graduates. The employment rate of women in the Czech Republic is 72.4 per cent and the representation of women in decision-making positions has been rising constantly. We have been implementing programmes to attract more women and girls into the STEM field, to raise female political representation and to facilitate work-life balance.

However, gender equality has not yet been achieved in many aspects of life. In the Czech Republic, on average women earn 22 per cent less than men. Their pensions are 18 per cent lower and elderly women remain at high risk of poverty. Women continue to be disadvantaged at the labour market due to long career breaks and lack of child-care facilities. Domestic and other forms of gender-based violence remain a sad reality for thousands of women and their families. Unfortunately, the list of remaining challenges is far too long and achieving gender equality is still an unfinished business not only in the Czech Republic but in all countries around the world.

Much of the inequality can be tackled by social system protection and family policy. In 2017, the Czech Government adopted the Family Policy, which contains many measures to improve gender equality. Increasing the number of child-care facilities is amongst my utmost priorities. I have been a long-term supporter of children's groups and micro-nurseries, which offer day care services to families of youngest children and thus help families achieve a better work-life balance. I have presented a draft of a bill that will ensure the financing of children's groups and micro-nurseries from the state budget instead of the European Social Fund as was the case. The purpose of these changes is to make pre-school child care in the Czech Republic more accessible.

The Czech Republic offers an extended parental leave, which many Czech women still take. However, as there is a demand for alternatives, I have introduced higher flexibility in claiming child benefit. I also work on its increase. Two years ago, I helped in making the right for a 7-day paternity leave a reality in the Czech Republic. Increasing the involvement of men in childcare remains my priority.

Another important task is the pension system reform. My goal is to make the pension distribution fairer by increasing the lowest pensions, which are received mainly by women. Another important step is to raise the pension benefits of those over the age of 85.

The gender pay gap remains a pressing issue in the Czech Republic. Women do not deserve to make 22 per cent less than men. We invest money in women's education and training, but we do not take advantage of their potential. Because of this, the Czech Republic has implemented a project called "22 per cent Towards Equality", which in the scope of 5 years introduces such tools and processes that allow employers, employees and trade unions to fight causes of the gender pay gap at all levels. Existing systems and institutions such as the Labour Inspection and Labour Offices and the Public Defender of Rights have been brought to one table to find effective mechanisms and methodologies. The project also provides deep analyses and introduces the problem into public discussion through an awareness-raising campaign.

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To accelerate the progress achieved and to deal with the challenges ahead on the international level, the Czech Republic strives to realize gender equality and to address this issue in all relevant documents both in its national capacity and as a member of the European Union. I would like to emphasize that women and girls are not mere objects in this process. They are the agents of change. And it is our duty to ensure their full and meaningful participation in all phases of policymaking, from design to implementation, from crisis to peace. Together we can work to realize the full potential of women and girls for the benefit of us all. Therefore, let me assure you of the Czech Government's unwavering commitment to this issue and our readiness to actively participate in the global dialogue on women's empowerment and gender equality.

Finally, allow me to invite you to our side events dedicated to two important topics. The first side event, which focuses on working with youth in the efforts to combat gender-based violence, will be held on Tuesday. The second side event, on Wednesday, is dedicated to family care and looks into what the costs of family care to women are and what the role of the state is.

Thank you for your attention.