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Statement by

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Mr. President, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honour to have the opportunity to address this forum on behalf of the Czech Republic. The adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 marked a milestone in the recognition of women's rights. Since its adoption women's rights and gender equality have been incorporated in national legislations and policies. The employment gap has narrowed, the maternal mortality ratio has declined significantly, laws on domestic violence and sexual harassment have been passed by majority of the world's countries.

Twenty-five years later, the Beijing Platform for Action still remains a source of guidance and inspiration.

This year has presented a challenge for us all in ways we could never have imagined before. The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare existing gender inequalities and threatened to halt the progress made.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 outbreak also presented an incentive to transform job routines and to accelerate changes which have been long called for. The year 2020 proved that flexible working time, working from home or teleworking are feasible on a much larger scale. These forms of work have helped to maintain economic activity and jobs. Women, and especially mothers, benefit greatly from these flexible forms of work.

Regardless of the current pandemic, it is apparent that parenthood or its perception is a key factor contributing to the unequal position of men and women on the labour market. Czech women are disadvantaged in the labour market due to long career breaks and the lack of early childcare facilities. Only 6 percent of workers have access to part-time jobs. The lack of part-time jobs and flexible working arrangements present an obstacle for women to build careers. Therefore, I sincerely hope that the current crisis will lead to a long-term improvement for all parents of small children who wish to work.

Tackling the issue of gender inequality may bring tangible economic results. There are more university graduates among women than men. Last year, there was a 15 percent wide gap in the employment rate between men with 88 and women with 73 per cent last. We still waste a lot of human potential in the Czech Republic.

In the next decade, we must make opportunities for men and women fairer. Issues in different areas will have to be addressed – segregation on the labour market, a lack of flexible forms of work, insufficient capacities of childcare facilities and many, many more.

We have already made some steps. Recently, we introduced a seven-day paternity leave so that fathers have more opportunity to bond with their newborn children and help to reduce the workload of mothers. Moreover, we have just introduced the possibility of job sharing. Two or more employees may share one job. We hope that the availability of part-time work based on job sharing will enable mothers of small children to return to the labour market more easily. Also, the Czech Parliament is about to discuss a proposal intended to make childcare facilities more accessible to parents. I hope that all future Governments will continue in this trend.

Mr. President, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, attaining full gender equality is not possible without focusing on all 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. The problems, which we face, are inter-connected and cannot be solved independently. Educational segregation fosters occupational segregation. Occupational segregation fosters wage inequality. Wage inequality fosters the view of traditional men's and women's roles, which in turn foster gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes foster educational segregation. We are turning in a vicious circle.

To tackle the root causes of gender inequality, the Czech Republic is currently in the process of adopting its Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030. We strive for Strategy that is both ambitious and realistic.

Thank you for your attention!