



# CZECH REPUBLIC

## Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations

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31<sup>st</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations

General Debate of the Special Session of the General Assembly  
in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

### Statement by

**H. E. Mr. Jan Blatný**

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Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address such an important body as the UN General Assembly in my capacity as Minister of Health of the Czech Republic.

This very difficult year is designated the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife. That is why I want to start by expressing my personal and sincere gratitude to nurses and other healthcare workers around the world for their tireless efforts and hard work day and night when providing care for COVID-19 as well as all the other patients around the world.

After years of paying attention to NCDs, we have been reminded that infectious diseases and epidemics still represent a significant health threat. COVID-19 took the international community by surprise. To avoid similar surprises in the future as much as possible, we need strong multilateral cooperation, compliance with international obligations and sharing of experience, information and best practices.

Building resilience at all levels is a key factor in preventing disease. Protecting and promoting health in everyday life of each community is a key in supporting health systems and fighting against diseases in my country as well as around the world. We are all on board of the same ship!

I want to make an appeal to political representatives and international bodies not to turn away from the principles of solidarity. The international community shall reiterate its commitment included in the Sustainable Development Goals – to leave no one behind. Each and every country in the world has to be provided with the support it needs. We must continue in dialogue with every interested party, and to learn from all those who have the expertise. The motto “No one is safe until everyone is safe” should not be just an empty phrase.

Today, after almost one year spent fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, we know more about preventive measures that should be implemented, we have learnt a lot and the progress made by science is incredible. But despite that, we are still facing the COVID-19 pandemic!

This shows us that we have to work further to raise public awareness about strategies that are necessary to address the pandemic, as well as on fight against the massively

spread disinformation. Only awareness-raising campaigns and clear communication, in combination with a strong political commitment at the highest possible level can bring us results and lead to mitigation of COVID-19 pandemic. The fact that every country in the world deals with COVID-19 unites us and provides us with a rare opportunity to team up on this issue.

Moreover, we cannot forget to learn from mistakes made. The pandemic has reminded us how crucial it is to secure key drugs for patients and appropriate protective equipment for health care workers. Thus, we should not accept any restrictions imposed on trade with medicines and other life-saving goods anymore. This will be, indeed, of the utmost importance once a safe and effective vaccine is available.

Besides the fight against COVID-19 itself, we have realized that the current situation has imposed a real challenge on the whole society and healthcare services. I strongly believe that finding the right balance between responding to the pandemic and ongoing provision of healthcare services is one of the most serious obstacles we are currently facing.

The humankind has never been in a better position to tackle the pandemic than we are now. We are living in the era of big opportunities and great tools that support international cooperation more than ever. International environment provides access to an unprecedented scale of tools such as ACT-A or WHO Partnership Platform that can help us to achieve our common goal – defeat the pandemic and prepare for future challenges. We cannot afford to miss this opportunity.

Thank you very much for your attention.