**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**45th session**

**General debate on the oral update by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**14 September 2020**

**Statement of the Czech Republic**

Thank you, Madame President.

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Madame High Commissioner,

We thank you for your update on the state of human rights in the world. Rest assured, *Madame High Commissioner,* that the Czech Republic will continue to **support your efforts** to openly speak up against human right violations and abuses. We will defend you and your Office, *as well as other international human rights mechanisms, including special procedures,* against any attacks on your *and their* independence and impartiality. We also reiterate our commitment to fully and constructively cooperate with your Office.

The Czech Republic is concerned about the current **financial crises** faced by the OHCHR *which might negatively impact the implementation of some activities mandated by the Council.* We reiterate the need to strengthen the funding of the OHCHR by regular budgeting. Throughout the recent years, the Czech Republic has been gradually increasing its financial contributions *to the OHCHR*. We call on all UN Member States to fulfil their commitments and immediately pay their dues. Given the gravity of the financial situation, we have speeded up our voluntary contribution.

Madame High Commissioner, we carefully listened to your update on the human rights impact of the **COVID-19** pandemic. We appreciate your focus on civic participation, the role of media and civil society in the response to the crises. The pandemic must not be used as a pretext to shut down criticism and silence dissent voices.

Following your oral updates on Venezuela and Nicaragua, we remain deeply concerned about the state of human rights in these countries. In **Nicaragua,** persistent human rights violations continue against *those who the Government perceives as opponents, including* human rights defenders, journalists, social leaders, and former political detainees. We urge the Nicaraguan government to respect the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, of association and of expression*, as well as the independence of the media and the judiciary*. In **Venezuela**, Covid-19 and the state of emergency have been used as an excuse to crack down on dissent. Journalists, human rights lawyers and political opponents have been arbitrarily detained, some of them subjected to physical abuse. *We will address the serious human rights situation in Venezuela, member of this Council, in our statements under item 4.*

Madame High Commissioner, over the recent weeks, the world has been closely following the developments in **Belarus**. We thank you for the attention you pay to the serious human rights violations in the country, *including arbitrary arrests of peaceful protesters, torture and ill-treatment of people deprived of their liberty and enforced disappearances.* People are being punished, beaten and tortured merely for exercising their basic rights, such as the rights to peaceful protest and to participate in public affairs. This is unacceptable. We therefore welcome the right decision of the Council from yesterday to hold an urgent debate on this serious situation. The Council must send a strong signal of support to all those whose rights are being violated.

I thank you.