**48th Session of the UN Human Rights Council**

**High-level panel discussion on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests**

*29 September 2021*

**Statement by the Czech Republic**

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the EU Statement and thanks the panellists for their insights.

Modern history of the Czech Republic builds upon changes that were set in motion by peaceful protests in 1989. Based on our experience, we fully recognize that peaceful protests, both online and offline, make a positive contribution to human development and to the full enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

This panel focuses on challenges and opportunities for the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests. In recent years, we have observed many important developments, including the changing nature of protests, both online and offline. At the same time, authorities in some countries have taken measures in order to restrict peaceful protests. The recent spread of the Covid-19 pandemic has further affected the exercise of this right. In this context, we share Special Rapporteur Mr Clement Voule’s concerns about the increased criminalization of peaceful protest; the excessive use of force to repress peaceful protest; attacks against civil society actors and increased use of digital technology to silence protesters with internet shutdowns at the core. Some of these situations are addressed by this Council, many remain overlooked. The Czech Republic welcomes in this regard Human Rights Council’s debates under Item 2 and Item 4 as well as addressing this issue within the UPR Mechanism. The Council must continue providing space for these discussions, including with regard to situations in specific countries, such as Belarus or Myanmar.

At the same time, we welcome initiatives in the Council that expand the international norms and encourage their implementation on the ground. There are many good stories about proactive cooperation between countries and the Mandate of the Special Rapporteur. We also acknowledge the role of HRC resolutions that improve and develop our common understanding of the topic at hand, such as those on peaceful protests, civil society space, privacy in the digital age and many more. All these efforts go hand in hand with the important work of the OHCHR, Special Procedures, Treaty Bodies, civil society and independent media.

Excellencies, dear panellists, ladies and gentlemen,

The Czech Republic strongly appreciates convening of this panel and hopes that its outcomes will guide the forthcoming HRC initiatives. We look forward to hearing other partners.

Thank you.