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

**Item 4 - Interactive Dialogue with Fact-finding mission on Venezuela**

*24 September 2021*

**Statement by the Czech Republic**

Thank you, Madame President,

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the EU statement.

We thank the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the presentation of its report focusing on justice system in Venezuela and welcome Ms Tappatá Valdez, a new member to the Mission.

We remain very concerned about the human rights situation in the country. The reported erosion of the justice system’s ability to protect human rights and prevent State sponsored crimes is worrying. The Mission’s report states clearly that there are reasonable grounds to believe that prosecutors and judges failed to protect opponents of the Government from arbitrary arrest and often deprived detainees of their right to legal defence.

We are alarmed by the conclusion that the State is not taking tangible steps to remedy violations and combat impunity. Instead of providing protection to victims, the justice system has played a significant role in the State’s repression of Government opponents. We reiterate our call for the unconditional release of all those arbitrarily detained.

Holding free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections is the only way out of the current crisis. We therefore emphasize the need to ensure conditions for meaningful participation in public life, including dissenting voices.

*Given the numerous human rights challenges in Venezuela, we would like to ask members of the Mission what are in their view the areas to prioritize.*

I thank you.