

**Address by Ms. Jana MALÁČOVÁ, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of  
the Czech Republic, to 109<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Dear Mr. President, Dear Mr. Director General, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me commend the Director-General's report, which faithfully describes impact of the pandemic crisis on our society, the economy, the world of work and the social situation of millions of people. Equally well, the report describes the weak spots in our systems. We need to learn lesson and be ready for future challenges.

The crisis speeded up certain trends in our economy, in the labour market and public administration. Trends like digital transformation might have taken years to play out, but the crisis gave them a new momentum.

Teleworking helped to maintain employment in many sectors while reducing the risk of infection. The use of platform work has also increased significantly. Digital skills became thus essential for all generations. These developments emphasised the need to create incentives and opportunities for workers to get the right skills for future jobs. We should support employers in using digital and ICT tools. We need robust re-skilling and up-skilling capacities. Remote training and use of new technology may bring new skills to more people, especially those who may not attend trainings in person such as people with disabilities.

Flexible forms of work organisation have been much more used. We have also seen wider use of non-standard forms of employment. This trend revealed the need to adapt and modernize our labour law and social security systems. Everybody who works must enjoy decent, fair and predictable working conditions, earn decent wage and be covered by adequate social security.

The impact of pandemic on unemployment has been moderate in the Czech Republic.

Government focused on job retention from the very start. Among the measures we have adopted, the short-time work scheme called “Antivirus” played the crucial role in maintaining almost 1 million jobs.

Emergency measures were introduced to help workers who had to stay at home with their children when school were closed, as well as to companies and the self-employed during the period of limited sales or closure. We adjusted our social protection scheme to prevent people from falling into poverty.

The pandemic has caused a setback for gender equality in my country. Women faced much higher risk of losing their jobs. They also formed majority of care givers and provided homeschooling for their children. Approximately 75 % of the beneficiaries of compensatory benefits were women. More women than men work under flexible non-standard work contracts that had not been fully covered by social protection schemes. By widening the scope of the wage compensation programmes, we ensured that those women were not left behind.

I agree with the Director General that sustainable economic, socially inclusive and human-centred recovery from the COVID crisis can only be achieved by integrated approach where all policies - health, environmental, educational, economic, financial, digital, labour and social – mutually complements and supports each other.

I am sure that International Labour Organisation with its renewed mandate and unique tripartite structure will be competent leader in international multilateral system to get the World out of this crisis into a “better normal”. I wish the ILO and the Director-General a lot of strength and determination in this demanding task.

Thank you for your attention.