

**Notes for the speech of the President of the Czech Republic at the UN Climate Change Conference\***

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Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

As responsible politicians, we know that we have to act when it is necessary. We know that our duty is to initiate public policy responses to issues that could pose a threat to the people of our countries. And we know that we have to form partnerships with colleagues from other countries when a problem cannot be confined to national boundaries. To help us doing it is one of the main reasons for the existence of institutions such as the United Nations.

However, the politicians have to ensure that the costs of public policies organized by them will not be bigger than the benefits achieved. They have to carefully consider and seriously analyze their projects and initiatives. They have to do it, even if it may be unpopular and if it means blowing against the wind of fashion and political correctness. I congratulate Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on organizing this conference and thank him for giving us an opportunity to address the important, but until now one-sidedly debated issue of climate changes. The consequences of acknowledging them as a real, big, imminent and man-made threat would be so enormous that **we are obliged to think twice before making decisions. I am afraid it is not the case now.**

Let me raise several points to bring the issue into its proper context:

1. Contrary to the artificially and unjustifiably created world-wide perception, **the increase in global temperatures has been – in the last years, decades and centuries – very small in historical comparisons and practically negligible in its actual impact upon human beings and their activities.**
2. **The hypothetical threat connected with future global warming depends exclusively upon very speculative forecasts, not upon undeniable past experience and upon its trends and tendencies.** These forecasts are based on relatively short time series of relevant variables and on forecasting models that have not been proved very reliable when attempting to explain past developments.
3. Contrary to many self-assured and self-serving proclamations, there is **no scientific consensus about the causes of recent climate changes.** An impartial observer must accept the fact that both sides of the dispute – the believers in man's dominant role in recent climate changes, as well as the supporters of the hypothesis about their mostly natural origin – offer arguments strong enough to be listened to carefully by the non-scientific community. To prematurely proclaim the victory of one group over another would be a tragic mistake and I am afraid we are making it.
4. As a result of this scientific dispute, there are those who call for an imminent action and those who warn against it. **Rational behavior should depend on the size and probability of the risk and on the magnitude of the costs of its avoidance.** As a responsible politician, as an economist, as an author of a book about the economics of

climate change, with all available data and arguments in mind, I have to conclude that **the risk is too small, the costs of eliminating it too high and the application of a fundamentalistically interpreted "precautionary principle" a wrong strategy.**

5. The politicians – and I am not among them – who believe in the existence of a significant global warming and especially those who believe in its anthropogenic origin remain divided: some of them are in favor of mitigation, which means of controlling global climate changes (and are ready to put enormous amounts of resources into it), while others rely on adaptation to it, on modernization and technical progress, and on a favorable impact of the future increase in wealth and welfare (and prefer spending public money there). **The second option is less ambitious and promises much more than the first one.**

6. The whole problem does not only have its time dimension, but a more than important spatial (or regional) aspect as well. This is highly relevant especially here, in the UN. **Different levels of development, income and wealth in different places of the world make world-wide, overall, universal solutions costly, unfair and to a great extent discriminatory.** The already developed countries do not have the right to impose any additional burden on the less developed countries. Dictating ambitious and for them entirely inappropriate environmental standards is wrong and should be excluded from the menu of recommended policy measures.

My suggestions are as follows:

1. **The UN should organize two parallel IPCCs and publish two competing reports.** To get rid of the one-sided monopoly is a sine qua non for an efficient and rational debate. Providing the same or comparable financial backing to both groups of scientists is a necessary starting point.

2. The countries should listen to one another, learn from mistakes and successes of others, but **any country should be left alone to prepare its own plan to tackle this problem** and decide what priority to assign to it among its other competing goals.

We should trust in the rationality of man and in the outcome of spontaneous evolution of human society, not in the virtues of political activism. Therefore, let's vote for adaptation, not for the attempts to mastermind the global climate.