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Statement by

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Chairperson, dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour, to speak on behalf of the Czech Republic at this historical session of the Commission. The Czech Republic, a member of the European Union since last year, has fully associated itself with the statement delivered by the Presidency last week. I would like to use this opportunity to share with you few pieces of the Czech experience with the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. I will focus on development of institutional mechanisms, gender statistics and gender budgeting.

Institutional Mechanism for Promotion of Gender Equality in the Czech Republic

With regard to the fact that the most striking gender inequalities are traditionally to be found in labour-related and social spheres, in January 1998 the Czech Government authorised the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to co-ordinate Government policy of gender equality. In February 1998 the Minister of Labour and Social affairs established **Gender Equality Unit**. The unit's main activities consist of co-ordination of Government policy in the field of gender equality. The Gender Equality Unit is responsible for preparation of the National Action Plan on Promotion of Gender Equality based on the Beijing Platform for Action. In April 1998, the Government approved the **National Action Plan "Priorities and Procedures for the Promotion of Equality between Men and Women"**, resolving that the implementation, evaluation and updating thereof be reviewed on a regular annual basis.

In 1998 the **Government Human Rights Council** (specifically **Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**) was established to advise and present initiative to Government. The Czech Republic signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1999 and it came into force in May 2001.

To strengthen the promotion of gender equality a new body **Government Council for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men** has been established in October 2001. This Council has an advisory role to the Government and is a platform for designing conceptual gender equality policy. The Council (23 members) consists of high level decision makers (deputy-ministers), social partners, non-governmental organisations and experts. The regional authorities have a status of permanent guests.

In May 2001, to enforce promotion of gender issues at each Ministry, the Government instructed all ministries to prepare their specific **Gender Equality Action Plans** and to set up professional **gender focal points** to administer gender affairs.

With regard to women's status in political life, changes after the general elections of June 2002 represent a positive signal in the Czech society. The newly elected Chamber of Deputies resolved to establish **Permanent Family & Equal Opportunities Commission** in July 2002. The Commission has 10 members - deputies representing all parliamentary political parties.

An important role in promotion of equal opportunities of men and women at work place belongs to **social partners**. Trade unions and employer's associations have different types of gender equality bodies such as working groups, committees and commissions. **Non-governmental organizations** do invaluable work in promotion of gender equality. They are mainly active in increasing of public awareness, prevention domestic violence, protection of victims of domestic violence and trafficking of human beings.

In February 2005, the Chamber of Deputies passed a draft law of the new **Anti-Discrimination Act** in the first reading. Currently, protection against discrimination based on sex is provided for in various laws and this new one should serve as the umbrella act in fighting discrimination in general. The draft of the new Anti-Discrimination Act significantly widens the existing competence of the **Office of the Ombudsman in the field of the protection against sex discrimination**.

Gender Statistics

The Czech government is fully aware of the fact that in order to recognize existing gender inequalities, it is essential to dispose of objective data. One cannot neglect that gender statistics reflect the situation of women and men in all social areas and point out the gender relationships in the society.

The Czech government considers the gender statistics an important tool for strategic decision-making in the field of gender equality. Only gender statistics and its gender sensitive indicators can show, whether any progress has been achieved.

The gender sensitive statistical **data must be known not only by experts, but especially by the general public**. We understand that the dissemination and even more importantly the use of publications containing gender statistics are very important for progress in gender equality. There are two types of publications issued in the Czech Republic – one, of comprehensive volume, is intended for the expert community is issued annually since the year 2000. The other, a small a booklet, has been annually published since 2003 under the title „Women and Men in Data”. This booklet contains basic data and indicators that are understandable for the general public. The booklet is distributed to state institutions, schools and universities, non-governmental organizations, libraries, and so on. It is a part of the information campaign and we use it on conferences, seminars, and other educational activities.

The very recent important step in this field was the adoption of a **Governmental Decree** in November 2004 deciding that all materials to be discussed by the cabinet must contain **gender analysis** and **gender impact assessment** based on gender statistics.

Gender budgeting

One of the biggest obstacles faced by the Government of the Czech Republic is still the low awareness of society of equal opportunities of women and men. In the present stage of progress of the Czech Republic, it is of vital importance to extend information on this issue to the public as well as to the decision makers on the use of public finances.

Before the year 2003, the method of gender budgeting was known but had not been theoretically developed in the terms of the Czech Republic. In agreement with CEDAW and the Beijing Platform, the government requested the Ministry of Finance to develop an **informatory methodology of gender budgeting**. The methodology was written up in June 2004, it is of an informative non-binding nature, and its main goal was to encourage and persuade people for gender budgeting. The **manual "Gender budgeting"** is intended for all authorities, especially on local and regional level, which decide on the use of public finances. It guides them through possible methods of fair distribution of public money between men and women.

We are convinced that gender budgeting is an essential tool in the policy of equal opportunities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it was an honour for me to attend this meeting. I look forward to exchanging further good as well as less good experience with you in sake of our common future success in promotion of gender equality worldwide.

Thank you for your attention.