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## **Statement by**

**H.E. Ms. Edita Hrdá**  
**Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the United Nations**  
**at the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

**United Nations Headquarters**  
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Czech Republic  
Candidate to the United Nations  
Human Rights Council 2011-2014

Dear Mr./Mrs. Chair,

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is an honour and privilege for me to address this session of the 55th Commission on the Status of Women. The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the Hungarian statement on behalf of the European Union and welcomes the theme of this session since we believe that women's equal participation in education, training, science and technology as well as access to full employment and decent work play a key role in the promotion and protection of women's rights.

The promotion and protection of women's rights are priorities of my government's long-term policy - as it was reiterated in its Policy Statement shortly after the new Cabinet was formed in May 2010. The proclamation that gender issues are highly reflected in our governmental policies is best illustrated by concrete actions.

For example, for the first time ever, a woman has recently been appointed the Government Representative for Human Rights. The best candidate to meet the difficult criteria imposed on such a closely watched office was Mrs Šimůnková's. Her first statements also declare that gender equality issues will be on the top of her agenda.

The Government of the Czech Republic annually approves the National Action Plan in Promotion of Gender Equality, called "Priorities and Procedures of the Government in Promoting Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. Its ultimate aim is to "combat all inequalities". The current National Action Plan *inter alia* declares as its objective to support the individual abilities and interests of girls and women, as well as boys and men, in preparing for careers in fields that are considered atypical from a gender perspective.

Another major issue the Action Plan deals with, one that undoubtedly runs across cultures, is to overcome the stereotypical views of the position men and women hold in a family, in their workplaces and indeed in society itself. In that context, we wish to further decrease and ultimately eliminate the still-existing horizontal gender segregation in the labour market. In this respect, the Czech government has assigned an analysis of our education system from the standpoint of equality of women and men. Its highly expected outcome should form a basis for identification of problem areas and propose solutions.

Equal access to education and training allows people to fully participate in society. In the Czech Republic, we are proud to maintain a very high share of women university students who comprise more than 55 % of all university students. Also, the employment rate of women is relatively high – 60 % with an increasing trend.

However, many challenges still remain ahead of us. We take very seriously the issue of family and professional life harmonization. Although women - equally as men - graduate from universities, it is predominantly women who are responsible for the care in their families. That situation causes a considerable difference in access to employment between men and women. In this regard, the Czech government has decided to improve the conditions for parents with children to allow them to return to work faster, to increase the involvement of both parents in childcare, and to support the emergence of family care alternatives. The aim is to ensure that women have the freedom of choice to either stay with their families or to return to work without further constraints.

Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates,

to be able to strengthen the promotion of human rights worldwide, the Czech Republic has the honour to refer to its candidature for election in the United Nations Human Rights Council for the period 2011 – 2014. On the basis of its own historical experience, the Czech Republic attaches great importance to the universal promotion, protection and implementation of civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights. The promotion and protection of human rights constitutes one of the fundamental principles which the Czech Republic adheres to in its foreign as well as domestic policy.

Mr. Chair,

To conclude, it is my pleasure to inform you that the Czech Republic has organized parallel event entitled Political Transition & Gender Equality in Central Europe, which has identified some lessons learned from the transition process in Central Europe with respect to the priority issue of this session.

Thank you, Mr./Mrs. Chair