



CZECH REPUBLIC

Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations

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Statement by

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at the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

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Madam Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is an honour and pleasure for me to address the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, one of the most important international forums dedicated to promoting women's rights and to ensuring gender equality. The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union.

Consistent with the high priority the Government of the Czech Republic attaches to promotion of equal opportunities of women and men, the Government annually approves the National Action Plan in Promotion of Gender Equality. The scope of chapters of the national action plan follows Beijing Platform for Action. The Plan includes assessment of the implementation of relevant measures and policies of the government adopted during the previous year, as well as priorities and policies for each ministry for the following year, so called Updated measures.

Within the Updated measures, the Government of the Czech Republic supports among others preparation of trainings, qualification and re-training courses that enable women to find suitable work while paying special attention to situation of women from disadvantaged groups among others women living in rural areas. Following to the Updated measures, in the course of 2011 projects were realized in all regions of the Czech Republic to support women who were inactive on the labour market for longer period of time due to childcare or care for family members with special needs.

In this regard, harmonization of professional and family life is crucial. Promotion of this principle was reiterated in the Policy Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic and illustrated, for example, by introduction of changes in criteria to receive parental allowances to allow parents with small children to faster return to work. Simplification of return to the labour market is essential particularly for women living in rural areas suffering from higher unemployment rate.

An equal access to education and training allows women including women from rural areas 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.

I would like to also mention that the share of women in the Czech Republic living at the risk of poverty is below the average of the EU member states. Of the total number of women aged between 0 and 64, only 9,4 % face the risk of poverty. It is the lowest share in the whole EU 27. In 2009, only 10,3 % of women aged over 65 were threatened by poverty while the average for the EU 27 was 20,1 %. Nevertheless, *some* challenges still remain ahead of us as women in the Czech Republic still face greater risk of poverty than men.

International and regional initiatives contribute significantly to enhancing the actions in the field of gender equality. In this regard, an important tool for promoting gender equality on a local level is the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life launched in May 2006. The Charter encourages local authorities to make a formal public commitment to the principle of equality of women and men and to implement the commitments within their territory. By approving the resolution in May 2010, the Government of the Czech Republic accepted the recommendation of its advisory body to present the Charter to the representatives of cities and towns. There are already few signatory towns and I believe that it will significantly increase in near future.

Madam Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Allow me in conclusion to welcome the priority theme of this year's session, entitled *The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges*. Women living in rural areas deserve our full attention. I am therefore very pleased that the Commission has the opportunity to discuss this issue thoroughly, and to share experience, examples of good practices and inspiration, which are so important for more effective future work of all of us. The Czech Republic remains committed to the promotion and protection of equal opportunities for women and men and of women's rights, including women in rural areas, as I have pointed out in my statement.

Thank you, Madam Chair