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**Statement by**

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of the United Nations General Assembly**

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**Check Against Delivery**

Madam President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me start by congratulating you, Madam President, on your election and by wishing you every success in the coming months of hard work. The outgoing president of the General Assembly, Mr. Eliasson, left an impressive track of progress in number of reform issues and it is my expectation that you, Excellency, will continue in meeting the high standards set by him. Behind many changes here in the UN over last decade we felt soft and decent hand of one distinguished person – Kofi Annan – and as he is getting ready to leave his position at the helm of the UN secretariat, I am taking this opportunity to thank him most cordially for all he has done. He made it very difficult and challenging for his successor, to do the job with the same vigor, skill and dedication.

To choose the right successor will definitely not be an easy task, but I do not want to leave this tribune without stating clearly the preferences of the Czech Republic. No personality from my own regional group has occupied this important post so far, and we think that time has come to seriously consider such option. Mrs. Vike-Freiberga of Latvia is an excellent candidate who qualifies perfectly well for the position of Secretary General and she can count on our full support.

Madam President,

Let me also welcome a new member of the UN, the Republic of Montenegro whose presence here brings us closer to the goal of the truly universal UN.

The distinguished President of Finland already spoke on behalf of the EU a few days ago and the Czech Republic fully associates itself with that statement. The EU invested a huge effort into preparations for this session, and my country was an integral and active part of this process. Therefore, I can limit myself to sharing with you just a few ideas and comments on issues that are in the forefront of our interest.

Madam President,

All of us – I strongly believe - want this world to be a safer place. This is a bottom line. And yet, the absence of safety and security seems to be almost omnipresent. There is a lack of support for billions of people suffering from hunger and diseases in developing countries. There is a lack of protection for many exposed to various environmental risks and natural hazards. There is a widening debate on energy security. There is lack of freedom and dignity for many women and men living under oppression. There is a lack of peace and

sense of vulnerability vis-à-vis all kinds of armed conflict. And, on top of all that, there is the ominous threat of terrorism, often fed by islamist extremists, creating fear and hitting targets around the globe (including their very own countries). All this makes it imperative for us to continue adapting our security systems; otherwise we will not be able to face this threat. And we need to be efficient.

To make the world a better and safer place is a complex challenge. It engages individual states as well as various international organizations. But at the global level, the role of the UN in responding to this challenge is irreplaceable. The Millennium Summit in 2000 and the Summit 2005 enormously helped in shaping our agenda to that effect, among others by balancing security, development and human rights concerns. We know what should be done – and we are so often failing to deliver, as our collective will is not strong enough to support the implementation of designed measures and actions. We often know the diagnosis, we know the right remedy and yet - we are unable to apply it.

Madam President,

Two weeks ago, we were commemorating the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the horrible terrorist attacks not only against the US, but I dare to say, against our shared values. The world after 9/11 is not what it used to be, and the UN had to adapt accordingly. On the eve of this chilling anniversary, we succeeded in adopting the landmark UN Global Counter-Terrorist Strategy, building on the previous efforts of both the Security Council and the General Assembly. I hope that this strategy will become more than a guidance – that it will become a real tool and real help for those who fight the scourge of terrorism in the field.

There is a general agreement that the international community and the UN should do much more for states and territories recovering from conflicts and disorder. Now we have the UN Peacebuilding Commission and there is a spirit of hope that the Commission will lead the efforts in generating both the political will and the means to assist countries in post-conflict environment, promoting the rule of law and democratic values, and preventing them from slipping back. The Czech Republic stands ready to assume its duties as a member of this Commission from January 2007.

Peacebuilding has to maintain strong ties with peacekeeping. Indeed, we are facing a surge of demand for that service provided by the UN, with Lebanon as the most recent example. But even if the Blue helmets were multiplied, there would still be a room for meaningful engagement of regional organizations in assisting the UN in maintaining peace and security. I welcome recent debates on

the role of these organizations, which already shoulder a fair part of the burden in Afghanistan, in the Balkans, in the DRC or in Sudan. From our trans-Atlantic perspective, I particularly applaud the intensifying cooperation among the UN, the EU and the NATO, and I am proud to state that my country is an active part of this scheme with its strong presence in K-FOR in Kosovo and in ISAF in Afghanistan, ready to look for other forms of support where we are not directly involved.

Madam President,

It was very unfortunate that the UN Summit last year was not able to find a common language on disarmament and non-proliferation. The uncontrolled spread, illicit trafficking and the use of conventional arms against civil population, the deadly occurrence of landmines – this all continues to fuel conflicts, human suffering and insecurity around the globe. My country supports all efforts, as well as several programs, to bring the arms trade and use of arms under a stronger control. But there is an even greater threat – a possible proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We welcome the fact that the Security Council is increasingly engaged in these matters, the resolution 1540 being a major step forward, followed most recently by strong signals addressed to the DPRK and Iran. Both these countries should fully comply with the nuclear non-proliferation regimes and to abandon any ambitions going beyond the peaceful use of nuclear power.

Madam President,

There is no freedom or security where masses of people are plagued by poverty, hunger and unhealthy living conditions. The Government of the Czech Republic therefore attaches great importance to the development cooperation and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. After the economic transformation in 1990s, we have been steadily, year by year, increasing our development aid. In 2005, for example, the Czech development assistance increased by 16% in real terms, (reaching the level of 0.11% of our gross national income), which makes us in that regard probably the leading country among the new EU members. Our humanitarian aid grew even more sharply and we are determined to continue this trend. My country also supports measures that can be even more helpful – a fair solution of the debt problem for poor countries, limiting of agricultural subsidies and creating freer conditions for trade. In that, we associate ourselves with the idea of Global Partnership for Development.

The development assistance is more effective where it matches with stable and predictable conditions, rule of law, democratic structures, successfully

fought corruption and respect for human rights – not mentioning that these qualities themselves attract funds as they are worth supporting and cultivating. The attention paid to these issues by the UN has grown significantly over last decade, resulting, among others, in establishing of the UN Democracy Fund last year. My country was one of the first contributors to this Fund. We are on the right track here, and I feel that we could go even further along this road.

Also last year, the UN Summit decided - as part of the overall UN reform - to transform and upgrade the Commission for Human Rights into the Human Rights Council. We have to work hard with others in Geneva to make it a beam of hope for millions of people living under oppression and deprived of their rights in different parts of the world. The transformation of the UN human rights machinery will be a failure unless the new body is stronger and more efficient than the old one, unless it succeeds in enhancing the special procedures and country-oriented activities, unless it finds ways and means to deliver its messages to where they are addressed, unless it secures full international cooperation in enforcing elementary standards of fundamental human rights. Regimes that behave contrary to all democratic principles, use their illegitimate power against their own citizens, imprison arbitrarily their opponents and violate elementary standards of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have to be confronted with an efficient system. It is one of the sad ironies of our time that Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest in Myanmar 15 years after being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. We cannot remain silent when members of peaceful democratic opposition in Cuba calling for national dialogue and reconciliation are still jailed and harassed as alleged enemies of state. We have to raise our voice of solidarity when a presidential candidate of democratic forces in recent presidential elections in Belarus Aleksandr Kozulin is sentenced to a term in prison for alleged incitement of disorder.

Madam President,

Over several years, “reform” was one of the most frequented – and often misused – words in our UN vocabulary. But even skeptics cannot deny that the UN in 2006 is profoundly different from the UN 10 year ago. While some reform projects were put aside, number of others was carried out, and some – most notably the long overdue reform of the Security Council – continue to wait for the green light. This year’s highlight is the management reform and the reform of the UN development machinery (the system-wide coherence). If we succeed in these areas, the UN could become stronger, leaner, less bureaucratic and more operational. Let us hope, that these changes will be backed by adoption of a new and fair scale of assessments, by adequate budget and payment discipline, and last but not least, by progress in implementing the Capital Master Plan.

In concluding, let me assure you, Madam President, that my Czech Republic is ready to fulfill in timely and orderly manner all its obligations as a member of the UN, including our increased share of the overall budget and our contributions to the peacekeeping operations. We acknowledge and honor our share of responsibility. And more than that – we continue to increase the volume of humanitarian aid and engage ourselves in assisting peace and security in number of areas around the world. I believe this qualifies my country as a strong candidate for the elected seat in the UN Security Council for the term 2008-2009.

Thank you for your attention.