



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
1109 MADISON AVENUE,  
NEW YORK, NY 10020  
TEL. 1(646) 981-4001, FAX 1(646) 981-1822

**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

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Czech Republic  
Candidate to the United Nations  
Human Rights Council

Dear Mr/Mrs Chair

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is an honour and privilege for me to address the 53rd session of the Social Commission on the Status of Women. The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the High Level Panel of Experts' 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, technology and innovation, as well as access to full employment and decent work, may be a key to 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 Women's Issues. This is a position that will have a direct influence on such a cross-cutting issue as gender equality. Her mandate is to ensure that gender equality issues will be on the top of her agenda.

The Government of the Czech Republic annually approves the National Action Plan on Promoting Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. Its ultimate aim is to combat all inequalities. The current National Action Plan, which is being declared as its objective to support the individual abilities and interests of girls and women, as well as boys and men, for careers in fields that are considered important 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 positions of men and women in society, which ultimately eliminate the still-existing horizontal gender segregation. 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 university students. Also, the employment rate of women is relatively high – 60% with an increasing trend.

However, many challenges still remain ahead of us, such as family and professional life harmonization. Although women – equally as men – graduate from universities, it is predominantly women who are responsible for the care of 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, to support the emergence of family care alternatives, and to ensure that women have the freedom of choice 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 a panel event entitled *Political Transition & Gender Policy in Central Europe* which will discuss some lessons learned from the transition process in Central Europe with respect to the equality issue of this session.

Thank you, Mr/Mrs Chair.