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Statement by

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of the United Nations General Assembly**

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Check Against Delivery

Mr, President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the 59th session of the UN General Assembly and wish you every success in this important position. I would also like to thank your predecessor, Mr Julian Hunte, for his relentless efforts and leadership throughout the year.

In May, the Czech Republic became a member of European Union. We took - for the first time – our part in preparation of the EU statement presented here by the distinguished foreign minister of the Netherlands last week, as well as in shaping the EU priorities for this General Assembly. It goes without saying that we fully associate ourselves with these texts.

We share the commitment of the EU to effective multilateralism with the UN at its core. Indeed, the vision of strong and truly universal United Nations Organization is one of the fundamentals of the Czech foreign policy.

Mr. President,

Security – or lack of it - has emerged as the most challenging problem. International terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure or organized crime – these are the threats menacing all of us.

Terrorism spares nobody in no part of the world. The brutality of the attacks and the increase in their number over the past year are frightening. And it seems that the whole nature of terrorism is changing. While most of earlier terrorists tried to target specific persons or institutions and at the same time to gain sympathy of general public, today's terrorists are primarily intent just on spreading fear and terror. Their target is the public, each of us, and the more the better. What can we expect of individuals who sacrifice unlimited numbers of their own people to a perverse ideology? And if they acquire weapons of mass destruction, it would be a deadly combination.

Absolute disregard for life by "new" terrorists has also given rise to their most dangerous tool – the ideological suicide bomber. Before, terrorists had to devote most of their energy to planning escape routes and concealing themselves; a suicide bomber, on the other hand, need only concentrate on how to best hit and destroy the target.

The diffusion of targets and absolute resolve mean that terrorist threats have completely permeated our public and private space, each area of which has become a place of defense. All this could ultimately lead to very disagreeable

restrictions in certain freedoms and rights. And this takes us full circle. If we are lax in understanding our roots and values, if we do not have a comprehensive grasp of human rights, we could find that in the end we are unable to cope with the uneasy balance between security and freedom.

I do not want to speculate about causes and results. Terrorist attacks are not just a reaction – perhaps hardly fitting but nonetheless a reaction – to our provocation. This is not the case. Their ideology is aggressive and expansive and they do not recognize terms such as "conciliation" or "co-existence". Therefore each offer we make to negotiate, each sign of unwillingness to defend ourselves is seen by them as further proof of our weakness and, by extension, of their "right" to assume control of declining society.

In the fight against terrorism, nobody can stay neutral. And the UN has to pave the way for this fight at global level. To be sure, the Counter-Terrorism Committee has done an outstanding job in overseeing the implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1373 and facilitating the universal acceptance of the UN conventions on terrorism, but certainly more can and should be done. The true tests of our ability to cooperate are Iraq, Afghanistan and Middle East.

Coming to Iraq, Mr. President,

it continues to be of utmost interest to the international community. The full transfer of power to the hands of the Iraqi Interim Government is a historical moment for the country and an essential step on the road towards free, prosperous and secure country. The road will be, no doubt, long and winding one. Without the elimination of terrorist activities and stabilization of the security situation, political transition and economic recovery will remain elusive.

Last summer, UN employees in Iraq paid the highest price for their commitment to help those in need. Now, the Organization has new tasks in front of it, including those connected with the preparation of the free elections in January of 2005. However, a greater engagement of the UN requires more secure environment and stronger support from international community. The Czech Republic's contribution is mainly focused on building up Iraqi security forces and helping to finance the protection of the UN in Iraq.

But Iraq must not divert our attention from other major security concerns, including Afghanistan, Middle East, Africa or Balkans. In all these conflicts, my country seeks to play a constructive role, contributing in various ways to the related efforts of international community. Thus in Afghanistan, the Czech Republic participate in stabilization process and rooting out terrorism, in Africa

it takes part in peace-keeping operations, in Kosovo we have our largest military contingent abroad serving in KFOR and we intend to contribute troops to the new EU-led mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we believe that the role of international community lays in providing trusted framework of reference. Sincere effort by both parties of the conflict is crucial for implementing their obligations in order to achieve the vision of two states living side by side in peace and security and in a peaceful and secure neighborhood.

And last but not least, Africa has to remain on our agenda. Ten years after the genocide in Rwanda, another part of Africa suffers from grave ethnic violence. In Darfur, people are dying every day, and around the Great Lakes the situation is not much better. The international community must not turn away from these tragedies.

Mr. President,

So far I have focused mainly on what we call hard threats to international security. But I do not want to create an impression that other problems that plague contemporary world are of lesser importance. These more traditional problems – or soft threats – also continue to deserve our undiminished attention. There is no question of these two threats competing for our response; there is no question of forgetting one for the other.

This is why the Czech Republic, as an emerging donor country, supports strengthening of multilateral development assistance within the UN system, as well as close co-operation between UN funds and programmes and Bretton-Wood institutions. And this is why we support and strive to contribute to activities undertaken in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development targets.

Mr. President,

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms remains a priority for Czech foreign policy. Together with the rest of EU, we put special emphasis on the abolition of the death penalty, the fight against torture (just few days ago we signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture) or the protection of children in armed conflicts; and, of course, the respect for activities of human rights defenders - which unfortunately continue to face difficult conditions in number of countries like Belarus, Burma/Myanmar and Cuba, among others.

Being convinced that all people are equal in their rights and dignity, the Czech Republic is concerned about recent attempts to create a human being through cloning. We therefore concur with those voices calling for swift adoption of a legally binding instrument regulating cloning of human beings at the universal level.

Mr. President,

Face to face with the above challenges, the UN has to change. Of course, UN reform seems to be on everyone's agenda. There are perhaps too many reform processes going parallel and partly overlapping. But to achieve a genuine reform, we simply have to keep the pressure on and the UN in permanent self-checking and pursuit of improvement.

The Czech Republic considers itself a reform-minded country. It is an advocate of the General Assembly revitalization, strengthening of the UN, and reform and enlargement of the Security Council. For many years, we have been actively involved in these processes, including through the Czech Presidency of the 57 UN General Assembly. We have no vested interest in these reforms, except for a better functioning and a greater authority of the whole UN. The Czech Republic will continue to support inevitable reform steps, including the enlargement of the Security Council in both categories of membership. In particular we support the aspirations of Germany and Japan for permanent seats as well as allocation of other three new permanent seats for Africa, Asia and Latin America.

We highly appreciate the Secretary General's reform efforts made so far and we expect his guidance to continue in the years to come. And we await eagerly the report of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons that should place UN reform in a wider context of major global threats and challenges.

We are determined to play an active role in finding multilateral and UN-based solutions to numerous grave problems of the contemporary world. An expression of this commitment and determination is our candidature for a non-permanent seat of the Security Council in 2008-2009.

Thank you for your attention.