

## 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council

### Item 6 – Universal Periodic Review

#### Statement by the Czech Republic

Mr. President,

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is one of the key innovations brought to life with the establishment of the Human Rights Council. This peer-to-peer scrutiny is an invaluable tool ensuring human rights situations in all parts of the world are regularly addressed and States are constantly encouraged to improve their record and reflect on the shortcomings. The Czech Republic attaches great importance to and is actively engaged in the UPR mechanism. In our UPR statements, we try to be critical in a constructive way about human rights gaps and challenges and we expect the same open approach from others.

In our view, the UPR's main assets are universality, openness and inclusiveness. We are pleased that the universality of the UPR has been continuously upheld and that all countries honour and take part in this human rights scrutiny. Unfortunately, we have witnessed that the openness of the UPR process, in particular the openness vis-à-vis civil society stakeholders, has been increasingly under attack. Not only has been civil society more and more often prevented from taking part in the preparation of national reports and implementation of recommendations. There have even been reported cases of persecution, harassment and criminalization of people involved in the UPR or interested in the mechanism. Some human rights defenders were arrested apparently for the sole reason of striving peacefully for the improvement of human rights situations in their own countries. In this regard, we have been appalled by the harassment, arrest and the recent death in jail of Ms. Cao Shunli, a human rights defender who had peacefully strived to engage in the UPR mechanism. We express our condolences to Ms. Cao Shunli's family and call for a prompt and independent investigation of her death.

Mr. President,

The case of Ms. Cao Shunli and other cases of attacks against those cooperating with the United Nations, including in the context of the UPR, are highly disturbing. We call for the preservation of the openness of the UPR process and for putting an end to any form of reprisals. All people jailed for being active in the UPR should be released without delay. We invite all States to defend the open nature of the UPR and engage in a genuine dialogue with civil society as a way of advancing human rights at the national level and beyond. The Czech Republic stands ready to support all endeavors aimed at protecting the spirit of the Universal Periodic Review of advancing through cooperation and dialogue human rights around the world.

Thank you, Mr. President.