

70th session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme

Statement by Mr. Ivo Silhavy, Special Envoy for Migration,

on behalf of the Czech Republic

8th October 2019

Your Excellency High Commissioner, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement made by the EU.

The **Global Compact on Refugees** is a very important step forward in defining the modus operandi of international community in dealing with the problem of refugees. The Czech Republic's participation in the process shows that we are ready to cooperate effectively.

We believe that the issue of refugees is best addressed at its roots. The Czech Republic's principal strategy is to support a long-term stabilization of areas at risk directly on the spot, through swift **humanitarian aid** and effective long-term **development cooperation**, which the Czech Republic provides in many places around the world, with the main focus on the countries of origin and the transit countries.

Our strategic priority is a **humanitarian - development - peace nexus** in order to use its synergy for strengthening resilience in countries and regions vulnerable due to impacts of climate change, security risks, and potential or ongoing conflicts. **Disaster risk reduction and resilience** are an integral part of our approach, just as the **aid in complex humanitarian crises**.

The Czech Republic is traditionally engaged in dealing with **Afghan refugee crisis**, including refugees in Iran and Pakistan, and in supporting **stabilization in Syria and Iraq**, including assistance to refugees from these countries in the neighborhood. We plan to be **more active in Africa**; North Africa with focus on Morocco, the Sahel region with emphasis on Mali and Niger, Horn of Africa and West Africa are our priorities. We have just opened the Czech Embassy in Bamako. We are ready to cooperate with other partners in our programs for Africa on a long-term basis.

The **Czech Republic is committed to implement the Global Compact on Refugees**, especially we want to contribute to finding solutions to the long-term and repetitive displacements of people, both financially and by sharing our experience.

As an example of a concrete aid to refugees provided by the Czech Republic, I would like to point out specifically one unique activity - a tailor-made **MEDEVAC Program**. It **flexibly reacts to conflicts and hardships** mainly in the **European neighborhood**, notably the Middle East, Southern and Eastern Europe (Balkans and Ukraine) and the North Africa and Sahel region.

The **MEDEVAC Program** has **deployed 93 Czech medical teams**, performed **surgeries on more than 3 000 patients** and carried out **227 medical evacuations** for treatment in the Czech Republic. The program has been so far **implemented in 20 countries** (such as Jordan, Lebanon, Senegal, Kenya, Ethiopia, Ukraine, etc.) and it also provides **training to the local medical staff** and **financial aid for development of local medical infrastructure**.

Another program that proves to be an efficient tool for comprehensive assistance and broad protection of the most vulnerable persons - refugees, in places where most needed, is the Czech **Aid on the Spot Program** implementing projects in the Middle East, Africa and Western Balkans. It has tended to the basic needs of more than **350 000 refugees**, provided **new roof over the heads of 61 000 refugees**. The program ensures food self-sufficiency, access to education and health care, opens possibilities for local business and investment.

The Czech Republic also takes care of refugees on its own territory on a top standard. The **Refugee Facilities Administration is unique in the EU** by providing **comprehensive services and solutions to the refugees**. It operates various facilities as reception centers, residential centers, integration asylum centers, and detention centers. As a general provider of integration services for international protection holders it also operates regional integration support centers for foreigners. At the same time, it is **active abroad sharing its know-how and best practice**, for example in the Balkans, Ukraine or Jordan, and its experts are valuable partners in areas affected by migration crisis.

Our traditional and key partner in cooperation on many programs and projects is UNHCR. Former Czech President Václav Havel said: „*Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.*“ I would like **to thank UNHCR for spreading hope**, which is a key source of motivation. We have to face many challenges and obstacles, not always we can celebrate success. However, we should know that **what we do does make sense**.

Thank you for your attention.