

23 September 2019

Check against delivery

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2019

Working Session 10: Rule of law I

23 September 2019

Statement by the Czech Republic

Ensuring equal enjoyment of rights and equal participation in political and public life

Mr Chairman,

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stipulates in Article 25 the right of every citizen to take part in the conduct of public affairs, to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections and to have access to public service in his or her country. Other core international human rights treaties elaborate further on equal participation as an important human rights obligation. Equal and effective public participation is a key element of democracy, the rule of law, social inclusion and economic development.

It is upon States to implement the right to participate in public affairs and to take all measures to ensure that every citizen has an effective opportunity to participate in political and public affairs at all levels. States must protect civil society actors, including human rights defenders and journalist, from all threats, attacks, reprisals and acts of intimidation.

The promotion and protection of participatory rights, including electoral rights, belong to the national priorities of the Czech Republic's human rights foreign policy. The Czech Republic promotes and protects participatory rights through political tolls in various international organisations as the United Nations, Council of Europe and of course the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We also cooperate with various non-governmental organisations and fund their projects supporting human rights and democracy in third countries, including projects facilitating civic participation.

One of our most important activities in this area is the resolution on Equal Participation in Political and Public Affairs. Since 2013 we have been submitting this resolution to the UN

Human Rights Council in Geneva and we would like to use this opportunity to update the OSCE Participating States on the recent developments.

Since September 2018, States can find guidance and inspiration in the United Nations Guidelines on the Effective Implementation of the Right to Participate in Public Affairs. These Guidelines, operationalized by the consensual resolution 39/11 of the United Nations Human Rights Council, introduce practical orientations and recommendations for States and as well for other relevant stakeholders in relation to the effective implementation of participatory rights.

We encourage OSCE Participating States to use the Guidelines as a practical tool when integrating civic participation as a human right and a key governance principle and into their laws and policies. The Guidelines can also be instrumental in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level. Since the elaboration of the Guidelines, States may request from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights technical cooperation and capacity building regarding the use of these Guidelines.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.