Statement of the Czech Republic

Delivered by H. E. Mr. Adam VOJTĚCH, Minister of Health of the Czech Republic

to the Ministerial Segment of the 62nd Session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs

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Thank you, Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. First of all, I would like to thank the Secretariat of the UNODC for their hard work in preparing the Ministerial Segment and the 62nd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. We welcome this Ministerial Segment that gives us the opportunity to share our ideas for drug policy in the next decade.

2. I would also like to stress that the Czech Republic is fully aligned with the Statements, delivered on behalf of the European Union.

3. Dear excellencies, dear delegates. The Ministerial Meeting brings us a unique opportunity to evaluate our previous political commitments and to follow a direction that will help us to achieve a balanced, evidence-based and integrated global drug policy reflecting the experience gained and responding to challenges and threats.

4. Therefore, we consider the recommendations of the UNGASS Outcome Document as the latest and most comprehensive consensus of the international community that will help us to achieve measurable progress over the next decade. It puts an adequate focus on public health with the same respect for supply reduction measures, including effective law enforcement cooperation. A repressive approach is often directed against drug users leading to increased and created new health risks as well as to their stigmatization, marginalization and social exclusion, instead of reducing the drug use and related harms.

Let me kindly highlight some aspects of the international drug policy that we should focus on in the next decade:

5. The number of drug users in services and programs is still very limited across the world. This means we must focus on investing in the protection of society through effective prevention and programs as well as finding a balance between control and availability of controlled substances while compliance with the three international drug control conventions and other relevant international instruments. We are firmly convinced that our commitments to harm reduction policies and other health interventions are a key step in
reducing blood born infection diseases. The principles of public health strategy in the Czech Republic have led to a significant reduction in the prevalence of blood-borne infectious diseases among injecting drugs users and only few overdoses per year.

6. With respect to the different population groups, it is necessary to implement programs and interventions tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of vulnerable members of society in order to improve the effectiveness of the programs. We would like to give more attention to primary prevention. The most effective forms of prevention are those that are comprehensive, long-term, evidence-based and continuous. Our priority should be the promotion of responsible behavior and the development of early and brief interventions for children and adolescents.

7. The Czech Republic has long advocated that all policies, programs and interventions have to take into account the human rights as drug users are often violated in the name of drug control. We support the principle of adequate, proportionate and effective response to drug-related offences and the provision of treatment, education, aftercare, rehabilitation, recovery and social reintegration instead of imprisonment. We strongly condemn extrajudicial killings as an unacceptable tool of law enforcement and disagree with the death penalty for drug related crimes.

8. We encourage and believe in much stronger and more effective involvement of all relevant UN agencies such as WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP, INCB, OHCHR and UN Women with their different but complementary roles within the UN system, and civil society in all decision making and evaluation processes. Close cooperation provides perspective and insight based on scientific evidence, professional experience, and practice.

9. Ladies and Gentlemen, let me at the end of my speech point out some aspects that we consider to be threats and challenges for the future drug policy. We are increasingly concerned about the emergence of new psychoactive substances that are more dangerous than ever before. Availability of precursors and other chemicals needed for the

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1 World Health Organization (WHO); Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); UN Development programme (UNDP); International Narcotics Control Board (INCB); The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
manufacturing is one of the major concerns for drug supply reduction efforts. The international community should also be ready to open the discussion on and respond to some new aspects of drug policy such as prescription drug misuse, aging of drug users, drug use among minorities and other addictive behavior.

10. Ladies and Gentlemen, it is clear that this year we have a new opportunity to accept our responsibility for the effective UNGASS Outcome Document implementation and move forward to the principle of a rational, humane, balanced, evidence-based and integrated international drug policy.

Thank you ladies and gentleman for attention.