



Statement by Barbora Antonovičová and Patrik Plavec

Czech UN Youth Delegates

at The Third Committee of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly

New York, 3 October 2018

Thank you for the floor Mr Chair,

We are grateful for the opportunity to represent the Czech Republic and its Youth in the Third Committee of the seventy-third session of the United Nations General Assembly. It is of great importance that we make sure that voices of Youth are represented and heard at this international forum.

It is also an honour to speak on behalf of our country with a rich history of youth participation in public discourse. Thanks to the efforts of Czech and Slovak youth, we can celebrate one hundred years from the establishment of the first democratic Czechoslovak Republic this October. Czech and Slovak youth was always at the forefront of resistance and independence movements, advocating ideals of democracy and respect for human rights in nineteen thirty-nine, nineteen sixty-eight, and in nineteen eighty-nine. It is inspiring to follow the footsteps of young people, who made sure that self-determination, human rights and active political participation are not vacuous terms, but essential values for a stable democratic society.

We call today for a rigorous involvement of young people in public affairs and for an inclusive high-quality education. Together, these are necessary for a continually evolving, sustainable society.

Accessible, effectively individualised education is key to unlocking the potential of all young people. Both formal and non-formal forms of education facilitate reasoned, well-intentioned public discourse, and promote equitable, consensual decision-making. Drawing upon the reports from the Structured Dialogue with Youth, and from previous Czech Youth delegates, young people in the Czech Republic demand a significant change of the educational system. They demand a change that would allow for critical thinking and honest debate in schools. They demand a space where they could learn relevant



skills for their life and employment. They demand an inclusive educational system that does not unfairly discriminate.

We believe that creating a space for horizontal exchange of knowledge and of diverse experiences between young people from different social or other backgrounds is a precondition for an inclusive, sustainable society, where each individual can reach their potential.

Emphasising the importance of the twentieth anniversary of the Lisbon Declaration and recalling the UN General Assembly resolution seventy-two slash one hundred forty-six we appeal for the recognition of the innovative capacity of young people. We want young people to have an equal opportunity to take part in peer-to-peer mentoring, non-formal education, or in interactive youth-focused events. We want them to have the space to openly discuss their projects and ideas with a peer who has experience in their field of interest to make sure such ideas are never lost. We want them to see that they have the opportunity to succeed in their goals and that other young people can assist them in changing their lives and their communities.

Therefore, well-rounded education focusing on language acquisition, information processing, and personal experiences as well as intergenerational dialogue that would reduce inequalities in social capital are all required to secure equal opportunities.

Our participation in this forum is only a starting point for a constructive dialogue with Czech youth. This dialogue is vital for a strong democratic civil society which Václav Havel historically supported. Young Czechs are worried about disinterest in local and national affairs. Making sure that diverse opinions of young people expressed in school parliaments, municipal boards and youth groups and councils are heard and considered enables and empowers young people to become active citizens interested in public affairs. Such efforts are crucial for achieving the goal of effective, accountable, and just democratic institutions and for addressing adverse effects of globalisation on peripheral areas.

In the future, young people will have to adapt to a world with a computerised economy, excess information, and new types of communication. It is our duty to prepare the young generation to tackle these challenges. And we believe that education and participation are an important part of the answer.

Thank you.