

**Speech by Mrs. Monika Šimůnková, Government Commissioner for  
Human Rights, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic**

**"Protecting children from all forms of violence"**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Violence against children represents a fundamental breach of children's rights and is never neither justifiable nor excusable. It is a tragedy that occurs at the beginning of an individual's life and has a major impact over its entire prospects.

The Czech Republic is taking the targets of the new strategy seriously. In the present Government policy statement, special attention is paid to the members of vulnerable groups, children in the first place. The Government pays particular attention to institutional care facilities and diagnosis centres and their funding in light of the increased support of prevention programs, and will support a rise in the number of school psychologists and special needs teachers at primary and secondary schools. Another of the Government's stated priorities is support for the development of care for children with specific dispositions. I hope that the process of deinstitutionalization and transformation of the childcare system in the Czech Republic, currently under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, will be successful and that at the next occasion we will be able to present you very low numbers of children living in institutional care. Since 2009, the Government has been implementing the "National Action Plan to Transform and Unify the System of Care for Vulnerable Children for years 2009–2011". Besides other core documents, adopted these days by the Government, I would like to mention the "National Strategy on the Children's

Rights Protection”. The final version of the Strategy will be adopted by the Government by the end of this year. Although the Strategy is primarily linked to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, it will be also inspired by the Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of the Child for years 2012 -2015.

Let me come back to the phenomena of violence against children – not only physical violence, but all forms of violence, which are often hidden. This issue is directly linked to the vulnerability of children themselves. In recent years, even in our civilized world, many cases of child abuse have come to light, some of them particularly dreadful and staggering. What is even more serious is that many of them have not been disclosed so far. According to the statistic data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 5787 cases of beaten, abused and neglected children were disclosed in 2010. The Czech Republic has taken steps to remedy this situation by legislation changes leading towards more severe criminal prosecution in the new Criminal Code in force since 2010. Beside the importance of legislative measures, we understand the necessity of sensitizing the public to the issue of violence against children by public awareness campaigns. This November, we are joining the Council of Europe “ONE in FIVE” Campaign especially focused on sexual violence against children and I personally consider this step very important. Nowadays, the question of the commercial sexual exploitation of children is often linked to the issue of children’s access to and use of social networking sites and their general vulnerability in electronic communication on the Internet. It is important that the combat the sexual abuse of children has often taken the form of an international cooperation in which the Czech Republic is actively involved. The State also helps to prevent and combat child pornography by fostering cooperation between the Czech Police Force and NGOs operating “hot lines” to tackle the illegal content of web applications on the Internet.

I would like to stress that the issue of vulnerable children is necessarily bound up with the urgent need to collect data on and monitor vulnerable children, and to make such data readily available in cases where a specific child needs to be assisted or have its individual situation monitored, both on the part of child protection bodies and the police, medical facilities or other agencies and institutions working with children. A Czech solution is offered by the “Early Intervention System”, an interdepartmental standardized system of multidisciplinary collaboration and rapid reciprocal information provision which should improve the situation faced by vulnerable children in the Czech Republic.

Ladies and gentlemen, in closing, let me assure you that the Czech Government intends to fully respect the principle that every child has the right to grow up without violence and will take all the steps to come closer to this common goal. I believe this conference will bring about a better understanding of various ways, in which we can make important contributions to building a protective environment around all children, the future of mankind.

Thank you for your attention.