



CZECH REPUBLIC

Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations

**United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the
Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action
“Water for Sustainable Development” 2018 – 2028**

New York, 22 – 24 March 2023

Statement

delivered by Mr. Tomáš Tesař

Deputy Minister of the Environment of the Czech Republic

Check Against Delivery

Mister/Madam President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honour to represent the Czech Republic at this important event. First of all, let me express my great thanks to the governments of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and of the Republic of Tajikistan for hosting the conference.

Water is an increasingly precious resource which needs to be protected and managed in a sustainable way. It is an essential condition for life on earth and it is unacceptable that it is being used as a weapon when conflict breaks out. We strongly condemn such abuse.

Over the last years, we have experienced devastating floods, but also long periods of drought and water scarcity, we observed water pollution, unsustainable water management and many other problems connected to water issues. Many initiatives to improve the quality and quantity of water have been taken at all levels. But as data show us, it is still not enough. It means we have to act, and promptly.

In many cases, we are finding that technical solutions from the past were unsustainable in the long term and brought many unforeseen problems. For example, river regulations, which were supposed to protect urban areas from floods, often worsened the situation, and on top destroyed riverbank ecosystems. We should learn from our mistakes and not repeat them. In some cases, technical approaches are necessary, in others we should let nature do its job.

For the Czech Republic, a holistic approach to the water issue is crucial. Adaptation to climate change, protection of water, nature, air and other natural resources should be seen as one complex system with a direct impact on humanity and human health. Water as a crosscutting issue should be tackled not only in meetings directly dedicated to water issues, it should be put on the agenda of other important conferences such as on climate change or biodiversity. We must break down the policy silos and ensure that water issues are mainstreamed into all sectors, for example energy, agriculture, food, health and transport. Only through cooperation of all sectors involved we can truly gain clean and plentiful water for humanity and ecosystems.

This objective is stated in the Prague Appeal from September 2022. In this appeal, leading international experts on landscape protection call for better linkages in the fields of climate change adaptation and biodiversity loss. It calls for mainstreaming of landscape restoration. These projects can be successful only if they comprehensively address all elements and functions of the landscape, draw on the best available science and promote nature-based solutions. Restorations should respect the economic, social and cultural functions of the landscape.

Czech government sees adaptation to climate change as one of its key priorities. To combat adverse effects of climate change such as insufficient water reserves in the soil profile or groundwater reserves, it is changing its approach to flood protection, agriculture and forestry, among others, to ensure water retention in our landscape. This could help not only the Czech Republic but also its downstream neighbours by making water flow more stable and predictable.

We also strongly believe, that broad transboundary water cooperation is needed to be successful in our efforts. Such cooperation is crucial for sustainable development, for reaching our targets set in the 2030 Agenda. Transboundary water cooperation can also contribute to better dialogue, peace and security. The Czech Republic is a member of three International River Basin Organizations. Cooperation with our partners has led to tangible improvements over the years.

Another priority task is to ensure the human right to water and sanitation worldwide. The Czech Republic has been implementing the ODA project in the area of water management and sanitation already for longer time, for example in Ethiopia, Cambodia, Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Czech Republic identifies itself with the list of voluntary commitments that have been submitted by the European Union for the Water Action Agenda. Furthermore, the Czech Republic supports the appointment of an UN Special Envoy for Water. We see it as an opportunity to increase visibility and recognition of international water agenda, to keep it at the highest political level in the UN and beyond, and to mobilize further action.

Thank you for your attention.