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**Keynote address by
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Dear ladies and gentlemen!

Let me start with a short story. It happened approximately two years ago during the Czech National Security Council meeting. I was participating in the discussion of a request received from the USA in which the US Government turned to us with a request whether or not we could help in Iraq by sending our special anti-chemical troops. The assignment of the Czech troop would have been the best solution at that time, but in case we were unable to provide this unit, it was of an essential importance for the USA to know this fact as soon as practically possible.

I am convinced up to the present day that to send the Czech troops to Iraq was definitely a correct decision. Similarly, I am convinced that our participation in Iraqi police forces training is also correct. Nevertheless I still remember how difficult the discussion in our national Security Council was. There was no consensus in the discussion. There were serious doubts as to whether the entire attack on Iraq is a good solution or not. There was no reliable evidence of the fact that Iraq owns weapons of mass destruction. We had serious doubts about whether or not all consequences of post-war development had been considered; whether or not steps leading to reconstruction and post-war arrangement of the country had been also considered. We were not sure whether or not we could estimate the impact of the war on the entire Middle-East region.

I would like to explain one thing. The fact that the Czech Republic gets involved in all countries in need is considered desirable and notable. Our contribution to the development help is growing significantly. We have more than 400 soldiers in Kosovo; we are taking over the command of a multi-national brigade "Central" in Kosovo; we are an integral part of the EU mission to Bosnia; we have a military police unit in Iraq and troops in Afghanistan. I consider the aforementioned involvement to be very significant. Being able to get an approval for such activities from the Parliament and the ability to persuade the general public is a clear evidence of us overcoming the legacy of the socialist regime isolation. During the Nazi occupation and then in the socialist period we were always taught to follow the proverb "Just mind your own business". It is very valuable that we are able to acquire political approval of the parliament for such activities not to mention the ability to get the support of the general public. It is necessary to be able to persuade all parties involved that such actions are necessary and correct. However, it is a pure and simple fact that we have to justify any such

action in the eyes of the public. We, the politicians, take over the responsibility for these steps and actions. We take over the responsibility that such steps and actions are making sense.

That is why I am not pleased at all when I say that many of our doubts regarding Iraq were correct. The situation in Iraq is very complicated indeed. A few alarming screams lead to the death of almost one thousand civilians only a few days ago. This is the situation in Iraq. We are afraid that from the regional point of view the result of this situation could lead to a significant reinforcement of the role of Iran that is trying to increase hegemony in this particular region.

I would like us to learn a lesson for our partnership from history. When I visited Pentagon about 8 years ago prior to our integration to NATO structures, one of the generals told me the following. "You Czechs come back to your experience from 1938 way too much. You claim that the West betrayed you at that time. But you should realize that this is something that always hurts us simply because we were not among those who betrayed you. If we enter into mutual partnership you can be sure that unlike the former allies we will really come to help should you be in danger. But in turn this means that you must not leave a back door open in this partnership." I still remember these words of the general, because he mentioned the real partnership in which one learns not to leave the back door open.

The Czech Republic joined the European Union on May 1, 2004. This was another step on our way from isolation; yet another step towards learning how to live with the others; another step that created other partners for us. We would like to be good partners both for Europe as well as for the USA. We do not want to be accused of leaving the back door open. This is about building mutual trust and a certain level of reliability. This is about the ability of mutual understanding. It is about not requiring the other to deliver more than he is capable of delivering. It is a very unpleasant idea for us to think about one partnership trying to confront us with the other partnerships.

Nobody can question the fact that we offered our help to the USA four years ago after the terrorist attacks on Manhattan openly and without any secondary aims. We were convinced that the attack on the USA was an attack on us all and that the solution should be found on the basis of a common agreement. However, the USA preferred the strategy of forming the coalition of willing. While we considered the 9/11 attacks as a clear danger for all of us, the USA clearly indicated that it was their own business. This leads me back to what the general told me about leaving the back door open. Today I would say it is a mistake to think we are able to face the serious threats on our own. The same goes for hurricane Katrina that struck the USA recently. This event clearly shows how unexpectedly such a disaster requiring mutual help and solidarity can come. At the same time, we do realize that we live in a world of new and very serious risks. German sociologist Ulrich Beck says we are "riziko gessellschaft" (society of risk). What he means is that we live in a world that brings new risks and threats we are simply not able to face. No country in the world can be sure it will hold up to such risks. The natural disaster that struck the United States of America clearly proves that even the strong and powerful can find themselves in a situation where they need help and solidarity. At the same time, this disaster clearly shows us how difficult it is in this world to forecast where the danger will come from; where we need to devote our resources, effort and attention. I have no doubt that we must discuss these issues together and that we will hold up in the future only provided that we act together. We are facing serious challenges of extensive poverty and suffering, problems of terrorism and lack of freedom. The current forms of terrorism are new phenomena that must not be read out of context. The forms of violence in

current world are results of privatisation and decentralisation of the identity issue. We must fight against the privatisation of violence by creating a public forum and platform for fight against violence while when it comes to decentralisation of violence we need to create a centre for common advance in this matter. The current forms of violence are a demonstration of human identity disintegration with the aim to cause the decomposition of the world. We must face the human identity disintegration with a set of common values. Fragmented forms of violence must be confronted with a common resistance. We shall succeed only if we are able to formulate common interest and find a political standpoint on the basis of which we are able to act. We need a coordinated and well planned action; we need a clear political standpoint that will enable us to effectively and meaningfully influence the way how we live in our common world.

I have participated at the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments that took place in the United Nations headquarters in New York last week. I realised that the world we are living in is not stable, organised or even fair. We have to try really hard to make it at least a little more predictable, to make sure there is at least some order and to have at least imperfect justice in place. I am convinced that the United Nations are the right forum and environment for a coordinated action of Europe and the USA. It is there where we can prove that we really do have common values about which I never ever had any doubts. I just regret that this fact might not be as visible in the way we, the Europeans, but also you, the Americans act. It is often said that the United Nations are imperfect and that there are even some corruption cases. The United Nations is as imperfect as its members. Its imperfection is our own imperfection. It is therefore necessary to consider our own share in these issues and try to improve this institution. We certainly will not create different United Nations. However, we need the organisation and will need it in the future. It makes no sense to create a different institution. We need reformed United Nations, which will be a credible organisation improving its prestige.

I am glad I heard the words of support for the United Nations in the speeches and addresses of democratically elected representatives of the parliaments from around the world. I have noticed that some speakers emphasised the fight against terrorism as the main goal, while the others mentioned the development goals and fight against poverty. The United Nations headquarters will host the meeting of presidents and prime ministers of all member countries later on this week. Most probably, it will be much more difficult meeting compared to the one of Speakers of Parliaments. However, it will be an opportunity to demonstrate our ability to reach a common compromise. It will be an opportunity to prove we are able to listen to each other.

The world will not be safer without higher level of solidarity. The solidarity will not gain ground in an environment with increasing feeling of exposure. Let us make our help more effective, let us prevent corruption and let us try to listen to each other. Let us find reasonable and effective methods for fighting terrorism while reducing poverty at the same time. We must not proceed naively. Yet, the request to strengthen the area of common values and mutual co-operation is not naive. There is no other way to go; both for Europe as well as for the USA.

Let me mention one last thought to end with. If Europe is getting back on its feet 60 years after the end of the Second World War, it must not be perceived as something that weakens the Atlantic link and goes against the interests of the USA. The political and economical entity of 25 countries with the population of 460 million must be able to take over the

responsibility for its security and defence. Building the EU military capacity must not mean the division or even exposure for the USA. Quite the opposite; Europe must not depend on the USA when it comes to security and defence. Europe cannot afford to pay for its security through Washington. If we want to continue in building the European integration, if we want to have the proper political weight, we must not remain helpless in terms of security and military. This would be very irresponsible. This would be yet another demonstration of disintegration. Future development and role of NATO is a question of our common discussion and agreement.

Thank you very much.