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## OPENING REMARKS

6 May 2021

Vladislav Smrz – Deputy Ministry of the Environment, Czech Republic

Full speech

Mister President, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, you have expected my Minister to address you today. Unfortunately, due to unexpected circumstances he needs to be present in an ongoing session of the House of Deputies of the Czech parliament, so please accept his apology.

Anyway, the Czech Republic perceives the question of food waste as a serious and up-to-date issue, which was also considered in our current waste prevention programme that contains specific goals with several follow-up measures just focused on creating conditions for gradual reduction of food waste. The European legislative framework, and thank you for mentioning it by my previous colleague, which was approved as a part of the so-called Circular Economy Package in May 2018, also focuses specifically on the prevention and reduction of food waste. And the Czech Republic has taken this into account while preparing the update of its waste management plan and waste prevention programme, which will now have a separate part dedicated to the food waste and its prevention.

Food Banks, without a doubt, play a key role as they are a functioning structure for reducing the generation of food waste and improving the overall use of food that would otherwise become waste. They collect food free of charge, store it and distribute it to the other organisations that provide food aid to the ones in need. In the Czech Republic in 2020, more than 7,000 tons of food that would otherwise be discarded or disposed, or even though it was safe and still fit for human consumption, were collected through Food Banks. With the legislative changes associated with the introduction of the obligation for retailers to donate food in 2018, there was a significant increase in donated food and a decrease in generation of



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food waste in the trade and retail sector. Food Banks therefore make significant contribution to waste prevention, especially at the retail and retail chains level.

However, ensuring the complete collection of food from all food chains in connection with the legislative changes, is not feasible without financial assistance due to insufficient capacity of the Food Banks' storage and collection infrastructure and as well, the follow-up distribution. It's quite demanding for the resources. The Ministry of the Environment provides financial support for building the infrastructure of the Food Banks via the Operation Programme Environment, the previous one, which contains the allocation of EUR 53 million for waste prevention, and Food Banks are among eligible beneficiaries. In 2018, there was already a pilot call for Food Bank entities.

Later in 2020, the Ministry of the Environment in Czech Republic, we have started intensive communication with the representatives of Food Banks, especially with Miss Láčová, and the European Commission, in order to ensure efficient support to Food Bank entities from the Operation Programme Environment. In the second half of 2020, the Minister of Environment opened a specific call for proposals for Food Banks with an allocation of CZK 150 million, which is around EUR 6 million. And the call was fully booked and currently the submitted applications are being appraised and assessed. The issue of the food waste remains one of the priority areas for the Ministry of the Environment and will be also reflected in the new Operational Programme Environment, through which the Ministry plans to continue to provide financial assistance to the Food Banks.

And most of all, I would like to express our gratitude to the Czech federation of Food Banks, for their excellent work that could serve as a role model for many others around EU and not only EU and thank you for your excellent work.



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