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Opening address

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Ladies and Gentlemen,
Thank you for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to speak at this forum. I would like to focus my contribution on the social and political aspects of migration, but not from the perspective of the current situation, but rather from a long-term and strategic point of view.

Migration in this respect is not the mere movement of people from place to place, but is a symptom, a consequence and a cause of many social, cultural and political movements.

In order to address this phenomenon truly strategically, it is also necessary to accept that migration is a permanent phenomenon in human history.

In certain phases, the migration process has had extraordinary political and cultural consequences. Today we are in a situation in which a wide range of scientific disciplines speak of this.

We can use as an example the European population, since studies from genetics and archaeology give us clear evidence of the impact of migration flows tens of thousands of years ago on today's developments.

This is not only a question of natural sciences, but the impact of migration flows on forming human society is also apparent from studies of linguistics, ethnography and cultural anthropology. Migration flows have been reflected in religion, mythology and specific cultural narratives.

Examples that can be cited are the Old Testament Exodus, Vergil's Aeneis, the legend of the founding of Rome, and the Czech legend about the arrival of Forefather Czech. It is a proven fact that migration as a social process accompanies and helps form human history.

It appears from a strategic point of view that we cannot think of migration in terms such as permanent halting or absolute control. We can ask about the causes of these migration movements, which we are currently experiencing, and then about what consequences they may bring. Of course, we can also think of political tools for regulating migration.
Migration usually involves a combination of natural and cultural political factors. The exact causes of why people are leaving some areas and have a tendency to to go to others (so called "push and pull factors") vary in each situation.

We have been able to observe the motivations for leaving in various combinations for a few thousand years, and they have included wars, oppressive regimes, human trafficking and circumstances such as slavery. Differences in living standards and individual desires for emancipation have also played a role.

Other major causes are situations when environments that have existed so far collapse, and natural, political and/or social conditions do not present hope for survival.

Even the migration movement from the Middle East and North Africa so far is no exception in this respect. The direct causes are armed conflicts, poverty, the inability to fulfil basic civilisation needs, such as a safe home, children's education or the opportunity to work.

We can identify a deeper cause in ongoing climate change, which is making some previously inhabitable territories unable to sustain life.

You can tell by the nature of these causes that these are not problems for which people would have easy answers.

For example, when we consider war, the peaceful situation in Europe has been achieved only due to major political efforts, motivated by an enormous social and political effort to ensure that the horrors of the Second World War, which managed to change technological progress into pure evil, are never repeated.

The result of this targeted political effort is today's EU, the European Union that some people today say is basically too distant from people and in short is too robust. However, it is its grandiosity and robustness that have enabled such important peace on our continent.

I would like to add in relation to this remark that one symptom of the years before the Second World War was also massive uncontrolled migration in Europe. The war itself then led to a further wave of migration and the creation of diaspora, the existence and political anchoring of which parts of the world encounter even today.

In the case of war and how much effort should be made to prevent this cause of migration, I wanted to point out that a successful response to migration movements must always be comprehensive and must take place at a well coordinated international level. This is occurring to a certain extent today.

The UN is involved in reducing poverty in the world, in ensuring education and ensuring necessities such as basic health standards. It is also the UN that is calling for slowing of destructive climate change.

A major success was achieved last year, when it was managed at the Conference on Climate Change to approve the Paris Declaration, in which 195 countries committed themselves to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

And it was eventually the UN that formulated the policy that was established under the term "sustainable development" and which is dealing with these major challenges to civilisation. Sixteen years ago, the Development Aims of the Millennium were adopted, which today have been replaced by the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030.
This is an action plan for the world fight against the phenomena that I mentioned as being one of the

causes of migration. As I have stated, thanks to the UN's efforts and countries' commitments, it has been managed to a certain extent to create more sustainable conditions for equal development of human civilisation.

We can only imagine how the situation would look today if it were not for the systematic efforts at development assistance.

The fight for sustainable changes to life is being played out at a time of increasing globalisation.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel also spoke of globalisation as the main cause of the current migration problem in her major speech at the end of last year. In brief, she said she believed that while so far Europe has mostly profited from globalisation, thanks to trade, the export balance and technological progress, it must now accept responsibility for the other side of the same coin.

Globalisation cannot be faced in any way other than by seeking strong political solutions at a corresponding level, in this case at the international and global level. It needs to be conceded that the globalisation process is something brought about by society and technological progress. So society can gain control over what it has created.

However, expressions of globalisation today are being played out in real time and are occurring in the steps and actions of specific people. Therefore, it is necessary first of all to make a scientific and academic effort towards understanding the signs of globalisation and the resulting understanding of a social phenomenon such as migration is.
Without a deep understanding of this social process, there is a danger that our public discussion will be dominated by myths and prejudices. These are based on the principle according to which it is not necessary to know facts, but it is possible to draw conclusions based on general collective suspicion.

Prejudicial thinking dehumanises people and deprives them of their right to individuality, which is a dangerous step towards depriving them even of their right to life.

To sum it up: Migration has been shown to be natural in human history, its causes have long been known, and I doubt that any responsible politician could ever say to you that poverty, hunger, terror and war should not be fought against. The fragile and volatile moment depends on what kind of response comes from society.

The determining factor is whether it will be based on simple mythical declarations and rejection of facts or whether it will be humanistic, conscientious, reflexive and effective at tackling reality.

Allow me in conclusion to make a brief remark. This fragile volatility is truly a major actual political problem.
In recent decades in Europe, we have gotten used to political debate being played out more or less at a rational democratic level, where logical and material arguments correspond to the values of voters. Today it seems that it would be necessary to defend the very meaning of material arguments in confrontation with myths and illusions.

In conclusion, I would like to express my wish that the result of the current debate will move us rather a step forward rather than backward, as well as in getting deeper into such a complicated phenomenon as the migration is.

I wish you a useful debate, enjoy your stay in Prague.
Thank you for your attention.