
Vystoupení ministra Jaroslava Palase

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Your Royal Highness,
Your Excellence,
Spectabilis chancellor,
Ladies and gentlemen, and honoured guests,

I would first like to take this opportunity to welcome Your Royal Highness to the Czech Republic and to express my thanks for the support which the Netherlands has given the Czech Republic in the water management field.

In August 2002 the Czech Republic was hit by very extensive and, in their nature, literally catastrophic floods. During the course of these floods seventeen lives were lost, with property damage being calculated at 75 billion Czech crowns. In the cleanup period that followed we were offered help and assistance from many countries worldwide, both of a humanitarian and a material nature. One of the first countries to come to our aid was the Netherlands. This significant material assistance also included an offer to provide a solution to endangered places throughout the Czech Republic by improving preventative measures as part of an international project aimed at assessing the vulnerability of inhabitants and property in areas threatened by flooding. The project, which was financed by the Netherlands, was very successfully completed and there is no doubt of its importance in the regional development the Czech Republic.

We are very grateful not only for this concrete assistance, but also for the long-term superior co-operation in the water management field, which is further developing.

I have been informed of the other joint projects in these spheres underway between the the Netherlands and the Czech Republic. The first project deals with an assessment of the selection of the ideal flood protection system in the Opava river basin in the northern Moravian region. The second project is aimed at economically and ecologically sustainable agriculture as part of the introduction of the requirements of the Framework Directive on Water Policy issued by the European Community. It is very important, namely for our region, from which practically all rivers flow, with the motto "Water Knows No Borders" of the European Water Charter thus also having relevance for other European states.

I am convinced that this co-operation between the the Netherlands and the Czech Republic as member states of the European Union shall continue to deepen and thus allow for the meeting of the EU's objectives in the water area. For this reason I welcome the opportunity to thank Your Highness personally for the support you have given to this trend, which contributes towards improving and sustaining water sources.