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## Chapter 10

# Sub-Saharan Africa in the Czech Foreign Policy<sup>1</sup>

### APPROACHING AFRICA AS A PARTNER

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**Executive Summary:** The Czech foreign policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa can be characterised as continuous with aims of deepening the relations with traditional African partners in the fields of economy, defence, security and agriculture, and establishing new partnerships mainly with the Sahel countries. Similarly to the previous year, none of the themes connected to Sub-Saharan Africa were either politicised or polarised. The co-operation between ministries successfully continued with multi-sectoral visits on the continent by the representatives of the Czech Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Defence and Industry and Trade. The Czech Republic was also active on the European level, since it took part in the 5<sup>th</sup> EU-AU Summit and also worked actively on the negotiation mandate and draft of the post-Cotonou agreement with the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries. The Czech foreign policy towards Africa puts an emphasis on creating real partnerships with African states with the aim to achieve their sustainability and accountability.

### BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Czech foreign policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa in 2017 can be characterised as continuous in the sense of its fulfilling of the *Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy*, which was endorsed by the Czech government in July 2015. The document identified Sahel as a security priority and, above all, mentioned the intention to develop bilateral relations with Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa.<sup>2</sup> Besides that, the government approved a non-public document titled *A Strategy for the Relations between the Czech Republic and the States of Sub-Saharan Africa*. It suggests strengthening economic diplomacy, mutual visits, official development assistance and co-operation in the academic and cultural spheres as key tools to promote Czech foreign

policy in Africa. Additionally, public diplomacy has become an important part of the foreign policy.

In 2017, the achievement of the objectives set out in these documents continued, as was indicated by Czech politicians' frequent visits to the region in which they were accompanied by business missions, the interest in security issues in the region, and the strengthening of partnerships with key states such as Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa. The Czech Republic acted proactively in establishing new partnerships with the Sahel states, as well as the Lusophone countries. The fulfilment of the regional strategy in 2017 is documented by the implementation of various projects in the field of agriculture in priority countries, such as Ethiopia, Zambia, Kenya and the Lusophone countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

## AGENDA AND EVENTS

### *Political Relations*

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) issued five official statements regarding the developments in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2017. This indicates an ongoing interest in developments on the African continent. In January 2017, the MFA expressed its concern over the decision of the Criminal Court in Khartoum in the case of the Czech citizen Petr Jašek, who had been sentenced to a twenty-year imprisonment for, among other things, espionage.<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of February 2017, the MFA issued a statement concerning the election of new members of the Commission of the African Union, including its chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat.<sup>4</sup> In August, it positively evaluated the election processes in Kenya<sup>5</sup> and Angola.<sup>6</sup> Regarding the developments in Zimbabwe, MFA issued two official statements. In the first one, issued on 15 November, it called upon all actors of the crisis to conduct a peaceful dialogue,<sup>7</sup> and in the second one, from 22 November, it welcomed the abdication of President Mugabe and the peaceful solution of the internal situation.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Czech Visits to Sub-Saharan Africa*

The year 2017 was busy in terms of Czech visits to Africa. Most of them were held by multi-sector delegations composed of representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Agriculture and Industry and Trade. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Lubomír Zaorálek visited Sub-Saharan Africa once when he travelled to Sudan on 26 February to negotiate the release of the detained Czech citizen Petr Jašek in Khartoum.<sup>9</sup> The Minister of Agriculture Marian Jurečka even paid two visits to the region, which is evidence of his pro-active approach in regard to and long-term interest in the region. In April, he visited Zambia, where he discussed the possibilities of deepening the co-operation in the field of agriculture, especially in the areas of artificial insemination and cattle genetics.<sup>10</sup> Zambia was a destination of Minister Jurečka's African visits also in previous years. This indicates an increased interest of the Czech Ministry of Agriculture in creating a partnership with Zambia and promoting agricultural and food production projects with it, as Zambia is going to become a programme country

of the Czech development co-operation in 2018. In July, Minister Jurečka took a five-day working trip to Ghana and Ethiopia together with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Martin Tlapa and the Director of the Department for Industrial Co-operation of the Ministry of Defence Tomáš Kopečný, on which they were accompanied by a business delegation. In Ghana, the delegation discussed the possibilities of co-operation in the fields of trade, education and defence.<sup>11</sup> In Ethiopia, their negotiations and political consultations were primarily concerned with the deepening of the economic co-operation.<sup>12</sup> The delegation also took part in business seminars in both countries.<sup>13</sup>

There were a number of visits of the representatives of the Czech MFA to Sub-Saharan African on the level of deputy ministers. On 7 January 2017, the Deputy Foreign Minister Lukáš Kaucký represented the Czech Republic at the inauguration of the newly elected President of Ghana in Accra.<sup>14</sup> Then the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Miloslav Stašek visited Zimbabwe and Zambia between 4 and 7 April 2017. In Zimbabwe, he discussed the possibilities of developing relations in the areas of education, tourism and mutual trade, and in Zambia he discussed the opening of the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Lusaka and the deepening of mutual relations in the fields of trade, agriculture and culture.<sup>15</sup> A mission of the MIT to South Africa led by Deputy Minister Tomáš Novotný and accompanied by a business delegation was held from 3 to 6 April 2017. The entrepreneurs and university representatives who took part in the mission attended the Doing Business Workshop in South Africa, the InvestSA seminar and the Business Forum organised in co-operation with the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry.<sup>16</sup>

There were also several visits to the Sahel countries, since this region is identified as a security priority for the Czech Republic, as well as the EU. The delegations consisted of representatives of the MFA and the Ministry of Defence, and delegations of defence industry companies and aimed at strengthening partnerships with the Sahel countries in the field of security. On 22–23 May, Deputy Minister Lukáš Kaucký, accompanied by Deputy Minister of Defence Tomáš Kuchta, the First Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Jaroslav Kocián and a delegation of the defence industry representatives, visited Burkina Faso. The main subjects of the negotiations were security, counter-terrorism and illegal migration.<sup>17</sup> The delegation then continued to Niger, where a memorandum on co-operation in the field of defence was signed.<sup>18</sup> On 14–16 May, a delegation of the Ministry of Defence led by the Armed Forces Commander of the Czech Armed Forces Jaromír Šebesta visited Chad, where they took part in a presentation of the products of the Czech defence and security industry.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Deputy Minister Kaucký, together with Deputy Minister of Defence Kuchta and a business delegation, visited Botswana on 14–16 August, where they discussed the possibilities of economic co-operation, mainly in the fields of defence industry, water, energy and automotive industries.<sup>20</sup> The delegation then visited Mozambique on 16–18 August in order to support the existing defence industry projects there and find further opportunities for co-operation between Czech and Mozambican enterprises.<sup>21</sup>

In September 2017, Deputy Minister Tlapa visited Sudan, where he discussed issues of its internal political situation and developments in the Horn of Africa region with an emphasis on migration issues. He was accompanied by the representatives of

Czech firms in the field of power engineering and the pharmaceutical industry, who also took part in a business seminar there.<sup>22</sup> The end of the US economic sanctions against Sudan opens opportunities for Czech firms to build on previous business relationships and enter the Sudanese market.<sup>23</sup> Lastly, from 3 December to 9 December 2017, a Senate Delegation of the Parliament of the Czech Republic led by the First Deputy Chairwoman of the Senate Miluše Horská visited Zambia. Besides their negotiations with Zambian Ministers, the delegation visited development projects in Zambia that are being implemented by Czech NGOs.<sup>24</sup>

### *Visits of African Partners in the Czech Republic*

In 2017, there were several visits of African partners to the Czech Republic. Opportunities for economic co-operation in the agricultural sector were discussed during the visit of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso Rita Solange Agnetekotom Bogore on 23 March.<sup>25</sup> On 18 April, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence of Cape Verde L.F. Tavares was received by Minister Lubomír Zaorálek. They discussed possibilities of deepening their countries' relations, economic and development co-operation and the EU-Cape Verde Special Partnership.<sup>26</sup> The Minister of Agriculture and Environment of Cape Verde Gilberto Silva visited the Czech Republic on 23–27 May and took part in the conference *Africa as a Partner*, which was organised by the MFA.<sup>27</sup> On 11–13 June, the President of the National Assembly of Burkina Faso Salif Diallo visited the Czech Republic upon the invitation of the Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies Jan Hamáček. He discussed co-operation in the field of education and trade with Hamáček, and his discussions with Deputy Minister Kaucký focussed on the deepening of the co-operation in the security field, particularly on the stabilisation of the Sahel region.<sup>28</sup> Then the Ghanaian trade mission led by the Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry Carlos Kingsley Ahenkorah together with the Deputy Minister of Information Perry Curtis Okudzeto visited Prague on 24–28 September 2017.<sup>29</sup>

Deputy Minister Miloslav Stašek received the Deputy Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and East African Co-operation of Tanzania Susan A. Kolimba on 2 May. The talks focussed on co-operation in the fields of agriculture, energy and wildlife diplomacy. During the visit the Czech MFA organised a Czech-Tanzanian Business Forum in co-operation with the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic, and it was attended by both Tanzanian and Czech entrepreneurs.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, in connection with Zambia's good relations with the Czech agriculture sector, the Zambian Minister of Agriculture Dora Siliya and the Minister of Livestock and Fisheries Michael Katambo visited the Czech Republic and paid a visit to the international agriculture exhibition *Země živitelka*.<sup>31</sup>

### *Other Events*

On 29 and 30 November 2017, the Fifth African Union and European Union (AU-EU) Summit took place in Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire). The Czech delegation was led by the Minister of Regional Development Karla Šlechtová on behalf of the Prime Minister.<sup>32</sup> The EU and African leaders met to determine the future direction of co-oper-

ation between the two continents with investments into the younger generations as a priority, since people under 25 currently represent 60% of the African population.<sup>33</sup> The delegates adopted a joint statement setting out common priorities in four strategic areas: economic opportunities for young people, peace and security, mobility and migration, and governance. The Czech Republic adopted a pro-active approach since it was able to put into the final document a reference to the priorities of its presidency within ECOSOC – namely it declared its support for the creation of sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through the participation of all states, which is an initiative contributing to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In 2017, there was an intensification of negotiations about the future of the relations between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) after the expiration of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020. On 12 December, the European Commission presented a proposal for the negotiation mandate, which was approved by the Council of the EU on 22 June 2018.<sup>34</sup> There has been an internal debate between EU countries about the negotiation and their diverging positions towards the new agreement. The Czech Republic demonstrated its pro-active approach in regard to this matter and assumed the stance that each region should have its own agreement. Finally it has been agreed that there will be an umbrella agreement and then three distinct regional compacts.<sup>35</sup> The post-Cotonou agreement should be based on mutual partnership, responsibility for one's own development, development of trade relations, the public sector, promotion of civil society, good governance and the rule of law.

Besides that, on the European level, the Czech Republic is a member, together with the other V4 members, of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa), which implements activities mainly in three African regions – the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and North Africa. In July 2017, the Czech government approved the provision of 24 million CZK for the support of the Libyan coast guard, whose main function is the detention of migrants from the Sahel.<sup>36</sup>

In the Czech Republic, the MFA was trying to raise awareness about Africa by organising various events with the participation of guests from African countries. On the occasion of the OAU anniversary, the so-called *Africa Day*, the MFA organised a conference titled *Africa as a Partner* in the Czernin Palace on 25 May. Its main aim was to present Africa as “*a modern continent with competent and skilled people*” and it put an emphasis “*on opportunities in Africa and the promotion of an equal partnership, revitalising economic and trade cooperation and involving the private sector*”.<sup>37</sup> The event was attended by various guests from African countries, governmental and non-governmental organisations and representatives of the private sector.<sup>38</sup> Another seminar concerning the Sub-Saharan African countries was a seminar titled *EU Trust Fund for Africa – One Year Later*, which was held at the MFA on 25 January 2017. It was organised by the MFA with the aim to introduce the Fund, which was created at the EU-Africa migration summit in Valetta in 2015 in order to facilitate the handling of the migration crisis and present concrete opportunities for Czech subjects in regard to it.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Security Relations and Military Missions***

In the area of security the Czech Republic has been responsive to the related EU policy with an emphasis put on the Sahel region because of terrorism, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the region and the migration crisis. The need to co-operate in the field of security with the Sahel countries was articulated, inter alia, at the meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council held in Brussels on 11 December 2017, where the Czech Republic was represented by Minister Zaorálek.<sup>40</sup>

The Czech Republic participates in the EU training mission EUTM-Mali with a mandate for fifty soldiers that was approved by the Czech Parliament in 2016 for the period of 2017–2019. Besides its participation in the EU missions, the Czech army also took part in the UN peace missions in Africa. On 31 December 2017, there were three Czech experts on a mission deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo under the UN MONUSCO mission, another three Czech experts on a mission sent under the UN MINUSCA mission to the Central African Republic and one Czech contingent troop deployed under the UN MINUSMA mission to Mali.<sup>41</sup> Three Czech soldiers continued to be stationed at the headquarters of the EU NAVFOR Somalia mission in Great Britain, which aims to combat piracy off the Somali coast.<sup>42</sup>

As suggested by, inter alia, the vast spectrum of mutual contacts illustrated by the liaison agenda, the Czech Republic has established co-operations in the field of security with a number of African states, and in these co-operations, the Czech Republic provides materials but also training and counselling. It aims to strengthen their ability to control their sovereign territories and achieve inner security in order to be able to fight terrorism and Islamic extremism effectively.

### ***Economic Relations***

In 2017, the decline in the Czech-African trade continued due to an ongoing economic stagnation on the African continent caused by a drop in the oil prices in the previous year and a slowing of the economic growth. The total value of Czech export to Sub-Saharan Africa for the year reached 18.5 billion CZK, which means a year-on-year decline of around 300 million CZK, but still it represents 0.4% of the overall Czech exports. More than half of the Czech exports to Africa consisted of machinery and transport equipment. Around 63% of the Czech exports to Sub-Saharan Africa went to the Republic of South Africa (RSA), the most important business partner for Czech companies on the continent. As for Nigeria, the Czech exports to it reached 1.2 billion CZK and consisted mainly of devices for automatic data processing and razors. Meanwhile, the half a billion threshold was exceeded by the exports to Ghana and to Mali, to which textiles worth circa 488 million CZK were exported. Finally, there has been an increase in exports to Kenya from 549 million CZK in 2016 to 925 million CZK in 2017, and the exports mainly consisted of rifles worth a total of 388 million CZK.<sup>43</sup>

The imports from Sub-Saharan Africa increased by circa 450 million CZK and reached 12.5 billion CZK in 2017. More than 60% consisted of the imports from the RSA, which imported mainly machines and apparatuses for gas filtering worth 1.1 billion CZK, and trucks worth 1.2 billion CZK from the Czech Republic. Unlike the im-

ports from other African states, the imports from the RSA do not have a post-colonial character since the RSA exports mainly products with a high added value. The one billion CZK threshold was also exceeded by the imports from Mozambique, which provided 1.2 billion CZK worth of aluminium to the Czech Republic. It is also worth mentioning that the imports from Cote d'Ivoire reached circa 800 million CZK, consisting predominantly of natural rubber and nuts.<sup>44</sup>

In 2017, there was a continuous economic decline on the African continent, which caused the related drop of Czech exports to it. Nevertheless, among the significant success stories of Czech firms in Africa as of recently, it is worth mentioning the Czech company Virteco from Poděbrady, which exports solar submersible pumps to areas without electricity in Africa, and also farm and hand tools to Angola.<sup>45</sup> Also, the company Zetor Tractors a.s. is going to export tractors, including spare parts, to Zambia thanks to its co-operation with its partner Agriserve Agro. The common aim of both firms is to provide their customers with a perfect service, and therefore for the first two years Agriserve Agro will employ Czech technicians from Zetor Tractors a.s., who will transfer their knowledge to their Zambian colleagues.<sup>46</sup> The potential of Czech companies in Africa lies also in the sector of agriculture and the food industry, which is represented, for example, by the African interest in Czech beer.<sup>47</sup> Finally, we should mention the Czech textile firm Veba Broumov, which exports *African brocade* to West Africa, and which once again saw an increased demand for its products in 2017 and thus started to recruit additional workers.<sup>48</sup>

Concerning direct foreign investments in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Czech company Pegas Nonwovens, which produces non-woven textiles, made an investment worth circa 2 billion CZK in the Western Cape in the RSA. The main part of the construction works of the resulting factory should be completed in 2018 and 2019.<sup>49</sup> Also, at the end of 2017 the Czech company Transcon signed an agreement for the construction of five regional airports in Senegal.<sup>50</sup>

In 2017, there were a number of activities promoting Czech companies in Africa. On 13–15 June several Czech healthcare companies introduced their products in Senegal,<sup>51</sup> VARI small tractors were presented by the Czech firm Knights in Abuja on 24 May,<sup>52</sup> the company SVOS presented its armoured vehicles in Abuja on 24 October,<sup>53</sup> and Czech agricultural machinery producers presented their products in Kenya on 27 April.<sup>54</sup> The exhibition *Czech Days in Ghana 2017*, organised by the Ghana-Czech Chamber of Commerce and held on 11–13 April, aimed at presenting Czech manufactured goods.<sup>55</sup> Finally, the first Regional Exhibition of the Czech Defence Industry was held in Burkina Faso on 23–24 May.<sup>56</sup>

Africa is still perceived as a continent of business opportunities for Czech firms.<sup>57</sup> In this context, various events with the aim of promoting export and trade opportunities in Africa took place. On 24–25 July 2017 the *Czech-Ethiopian Business Forum* was held in Prague with the participation of Czech and Ethiopian companies.<sup>58</sup> On 8 November, the seminar *Zambia, Angola and Mozambique – Export and Investment Opportunities* was organised by the MFA.<sup>59</sup> Another business seminar, *Tanzania – Opportunities for Czech Firms*, was held at the MFA on 2 May 2017 with the participation of a business delegation from Tanzania.<sup>60</sup> Lastly, the International Chamber of

Commerce organised a seminar on the economic and trade relations with Nigeria in Prague on 21 September.<sup>61</sup>

There were eighteen Czech projects for the support of economic diplomacy (PROPED) realised in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2017. Their preparation was consulted, *inter alia*, with the business associations, and the interest of export firms in them indicated that the decrease of exports to Sub-Saharan Africa in 2017 is evidence of a persistent economic stagnation on the African continent rather than a lack of support or a lack of interest from the Czech firms. As a part of the PROPED projects, for example, a business mission to Cameroon was held,<sup>62</sup> and Congolese farmers,<sup>63</sup> farmers from Niger,<sup>64</sup> Cameroonian entrepreneurs in the fields of agriculture and agro-food<sup>65</sup> and Ethiopian entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector visited the Czech Republic.<sup>66</sup>

## IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTIC OF KEY ACTORS

The MFA and its Department of Sub-Saharan Africa remain the primary actors of the Czech foreign policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa. The interest in Africa is evident in the gradual strengthening of Czech embassies in the region. In 2017, there were seven Czech embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa. By 31 July, the embassy in the Zimbabwean city Harare was closed and moved to the Zambian capital Lusaka. The embassy in Lusaka was opened already on 1 March 2017 since Zambia was going to become the priority country of the Czech development co-operation in 2018.<sup>67</sup> With the closure of the Czech embassy in Harare, the embassy in Lusaka took over all diplomatic as well as consular functions for Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe since 1 August 2017.<sup>68</sup>

As for other Czech embassies in the region, since October 2017, the Czech Embassy in Dakar is headed by an Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, and the diplomatic mission of the embassy in Senegal has expanded to Gambia and Guinea. The Business Section of the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Pretoria was reinforced by a Lusophone diplomat with the aim to strengthen relations with Angola and Mozambique. Also in 2017, a Czech Development Agency diplomat was appointed to the Embassy in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. Ethiopia and Zambia are programme countries of the Czech official development aid and therefore, a permanent Czech presence in these countries is key for the implementation of specific development projects.<sup>69</sup> Lastly, in order to stress the potential of the Nigerian market for Czech firms and increase their business opportunities in the region, a new office of Czech-Trade was opened in the Nigerian city Lagos at the beginning of 2017.<sup>70</sup>

The effectivity of the Czech foreign policy towards Africa is reinforced by the multi-departmental co-operation between the MFA, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MIT), which is being materialised by means of joint travels to African countries. Besides that the MFA and the MIT co-operate on promoting Africa as a region of opportunities for Czech firms and help them to enter African markets by publishing the Catalogue of Exporters' Services and the Map of Global Business Opportunities. Both of these instruments were met with a positive feedback from the interested firms.



## MEDIA AND PUBLIC SPACE

The MFA aims to raise awareness of Africa since it feels the need to erase the stereotypes and bad image of Africa that were mostly created because of the migration crisis in the previous years. The Department of Sub-Saharan Africa has created its own Facebook profile, where it publishes various pieces of information concerning Czech-African relations. In the context of economic matters, however, Africa is seen by the Czech media as a continent of opportunities for Czech entrepreneurs.<sup>71</sup> Yet the media criticised the costs of the foreign visits of Minister Marian Jurečka to Zambia,<sup>72</sup> even though his personal contribution to the Czech-African relations in the field of agriculture was indisputable.

As was traditionally the case, in 2017 the Czech media paid attention to charity collections for Africa, such as *Bicycles for Africa*,<sup>73</sup> and various issues connected to wildlife in Africa.<sup>74</sup> Then there were various educational activities between Czech and African partners: Representatives of the Prague Zoo in co-operation with the Cameroonian partners ran the *Busy Bus* project to support the education of school children in the field of nature conservation.<sup>75</sup> On 16 February 2017, experts from the Czech organisation Derbianus Conservation, who co-operated with the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, visited the University in Thies in Senegal with the aim of enthusing its students for the preservation of Derby's antelope and convince them of the antelope's ecotourism potential.<sup>76</sup> Finally, on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the Czech explorers Miroslav Zikmund and Jiří Hanzelka's first expedition to Africa, academics from the University of West Bohemia in co-operation with the Museum of Southeastern Moravia in Zlín and with the support of the city of Pilsen created an exhibition which explained how Africa has changed since then.<sup>77</sup>

African culture was promoted in the Czech Republic at various events in 2017. For example, the Ghana Dance Ensemble presented its *Ghana Sunrise* performance at the Dance Prague festival as a result of the historically first ever Czech-Ghanaian project of co-operation in contemporary dance.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Czech culture was promoted in Africa as well, since the Czech embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa raise awareness about the Czech Republic on the continent by organising various cultural events such as the screening of the Czech movie *Little Girl Blue* at the European Film Festival in Sierra Leone in May 2017.<sup>79</sup>

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Czech foreign policy towards Africa in 2017 can be perceived as continuous with the attention paid mainly to the deepening of economic relations and the promotion of economic diplomacy with the region. Despite a decrease in the Czech exports to it in 2017, which was caused by factors on the African continent, Czech firms continued to express their interest in exporting to Africa. A physical presence on the continent, participation of business delegations in visits to the region, business seminars which provide information and contacts, and a multi-sectoral co-operation of Czech Minis-

tries are key conditions for entering the African markets. The newly opened Czech-Trade office in Lagos may help Czech exporters and investors to identify potential business opportunities in West Africa. However, the possibilities for Czech companies to export to Sub-Saharan Africa are to a large extent limited by the fact that many of the African countries are ranked by the OECD in the worst category of export credit insurability, and consequently export insurance creates additional costs for the companies. Therefore, a simplification in this area could encourage an increased interest on the part of Czech companies in exporting to the region.

In 2017, the strengthening of the Czech embassies in Africa continued. The Czech embassy in Harare moved to Lusaka as Zambia became a programme country of the Czech ODA, the embassy in Addis Ababa received a new development diplomat and the embassy in Pretoria gained a Lusophone diplomat. An irreplaceable role here is played by the personal engagement of Czech politicians, including the Minister of Agriculture Marian Jurečka, who paid several visits to the continent in previous years. The continuing support for agricultural projects and co-operation with African countries in the area of development, as it was promoted by Minister Jurečka, is crucial for achieving their self-sufficiency, their human security and, consequently, also their security in general. Furthermore, in order to fulfil the priorities it is necessary to erase the negative image of Africa created by the media in previous years and therefore, public diplomacy has become an important part of the foreign policy towards Africa.

On the European level, the Czech Republic is able to project its bilateral agenda to the EU policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa, and vice versa, it takes into account the EU agenda in its bilateral relations with African states. Therefore, the Czech foreign policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa can be characterised as responsive to the European agenda, mainly in the fields of defence and security, and also as proactive, since the MFA was active at the 5<sup>th</sup> AU-EU summit and in the negotiations about the post-Cotonou agreement. The Czech Republic promotes good governance and the rule of law and supports African countries in their achieving of sustainability and self-sufficiency through agriculture and security co-operation. In this respect, the Czech Republic is strengthening its equal partnerships with African states, approaches them as partners and is successfully trying to overcome the donor-recipient paradigm. This approach is crucial for achieving the responsibility of African states for their own development. Also Czech firms are aware that it is not enough to export to Africa, but that they should respond to the African interest in technology transfer and investment in the region, which is a key to achieving a real partnership with African states.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank an MFA official for the interview on 28. 3. 2018 and their valuable insight and comments. However, any mistakes and the interpretation and assessment of Czech foreign policy remain the sole responsibility of the author.

- <sup>2</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic (2015) *Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky. Usnesení vlády 563 [Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy. Government Resolution No. 563]* [online]. Available from: [https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni\\_vztahy/analyzy\\_a\\_koncepce/koncepce\\_zahranicni\\_politiky\\_cr.html](https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/analyzy_a_koncepce/koncepce_zahranicni_politiky_cr.html) (Accessed 3 March 2018).
- <sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic (2017) *Petr Jašek byl dnes odsouzen v Súdánu, MZV bude jednat o jeho propuštění [Petr Jašek Was Sentenced Today in Sudan; the MFA Will Negotiate His Release]* [online]. Available from: [https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/udalosti\\_a\\_media/prohlasoni\\_a\\_stanoviska/archiv\\_prohlasoni\\_a\\_stanovisek/archiv\\_2017/petr\\_jasek\\_byl\\_dnes\\_odsouzen\\_v\\_sudanu.html](https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/udalosti_a_media/prohlasoni_a_stanoviska/archiv_prohlasoni_a_stanovisek/archiv_2017/petr_jasek_byl_dnes_odsouzen_v_sudanu.html) (Accessed 10 March 2018).
- <sup>4</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic (2017) *MZV ČR k summitu Africké unie [The Czech MFA at the AU Summit]* [online]. Available from: [https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/udalosti\\_a\\_media/prohlasoni\\_a\\_stanoviska/archiv\\_prohlasoni\\_a\\_stanovisek/archiv\\_2017/x2017\\_01\\_30\\_mzv\\_summit\\_africke\\_unie.html](https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/udalosti_a_media/prohlasoni_a_stanoviska/archiv_prohlasoni_a_stanovisek/archiv_2017/x2017_01_30_mzv_summit_africke_unie.html) (Accessed 10 March 2018).
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