

**Speech of Mr Miloš Vystrčil, the President of the Czech Senate:
Solidarity among democracies and protection of common values**

Dear Mr. President of Legislative Yuan Yu Shyi-kun,
Honourable members of the Legislative Yuan,
Fellow Senators,
Ladies and gentlemen, dear guests,

In the speech I delivered yesterday at the National Chengchi University, I elaborated on the similarities of our past in detail. I talked about the effort it took and that is still required now to ensure we live in freedom and democracy.

In addition, I called for solidarity among democracies and the protection of our common values.

I praised young people of our two countries for being interested in the society instead of being indifferent to conflict of interests among politicians, non-transparency and other issues.

Today I have the opportunity to address the highest legislative assembly of Taiwan – the Legislative Yuan. I am very grateful and would like to thank you for this opportunity.

The delegation arriving here from the Czech Senate has a strong line-up and I would like to introduce briefly my colleagues to you.

Let me start with the First Vice-President of the Senate Mr Jiří Růžička – an open-minded person who is knowledgeable especially in the field of education. Among other positions, he served as a Headmaster of a highly prestigious grammar school of Jan Kepler in Prague and he once was an outstanding young athlete.

Senator Pavel Fischer is a Chair of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security Committee of the Senate. He is the one with whom I have discussed my trip to Taiwan the most and he has done a great deal of work for the success of our visit here in Taiwan.

Senator Lumír Kantor is a Chair of the Health and Social Policy Committee and you can probably very well guess why he wanted to participate in this trip. He is a long-serving senior doctor of a neonatology, he is very keen to learn more about your healthcare system and not only due to your excellent management of the coronavirus pandemic.

Senator Petr Šilar is a Chair of the Senate's Christian Democratic Caucus and a very experienced politician with extensive knowledge of agriculture, underpinned by his practical experience.

Senator Lumír Aschenbrenner is a Vice-Chairperson of the Economy, Agriculture and Transport Committee, an art lover and as a citizen of Pilsner City, he is a proud champion of Pilsner beer.

Senator Tomáš Goláň is a Vice-Chair of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee and a great expert on tax issues. He is a very open and straightforward person.

And last but not least, Senator Pavel Štöhl is a Vice-Chair of the Education, Science, Culture, Human Rights and Petitions Committee. He is knowledgeable about academia and he also serves as a Deputy Chancellor at a private university of economics.

Furthermore, allow me to greet you on behalf of the Czech Senate, the upper chamber of the Czech Parliament, which I personally consider to be the most democratic and independent institution in the Czech Republic. At the same time, I am proud to remind you that that 50 out of 52 Senators who were present during the vote on our trip to Taiwan expressed their support. This represents a 96 % majority of the Senators present.

Honourable members of the Legislative Yuan, ladies and gentlemen.

You have probably noticed that whenever I mention the Czech Senate, I usually remind you that it is the upper chamber of the Czech Parliament. Having said that, it means apart from the upper chamber we also have a lower chamber in the Czech Republic – the Chamber of Deputies. In another words, our Parliament is bicameral. While 81 Senators in the upper chamber are elected under the majority system in which each Senator represents one constituency, there are 200 members of the lower chamber elected on the basis of proportional election system.

In our parliamentary system, each chamber has a different position defined by the constitution and legislation in force.

I do not explain this in front of your Legislative Yuan in order to introduce our political system but rather to illustrate the obvious fact that a functioning democracy can have and, in fact, it often has different forms in various countries. For example, in your country you have a unicameral parliament in which - to my knowledge - a larger share of the legislators is under the majority system, while the remaining part is elected on the basis of a proportional election system.

And here comes the inevitable question how we can tell which democratic system works better and which one works not so well? How can we tell which democratic system is the best one or rather the most appropriate one?

Personally, I am convinced there are different forms of functional democracy and that one universal democratic system suitable and best for all countries of the world does not exist and cannot exist. This is simply due to the fact that we are all different in different parts of this

world. We have different customs, different traditions, different history, different traits, different priorities and I could go on for quite a long time, listing all the differences.

Functional democracy cannot be defined merely by the number of chambers or the size of its legislative body.

Functional democracy in the independent and democratic world is determined by different criteria. Functional democracy in the independent and democratic world must acknowledge that a human being and a human life has the highest, and I repeat, the highest value.

And that is why the existence of a framework is crucial. The framework that protects an individual and does not limit, marginalize or command what the individual can and cannot think, what what can be said and what cannot or what can be done or not to be done

There is no better place than the Legislative Yuan, your Parliament, to discuss this matter. After all, we should not adopt legislation only to limit the initiatives of our people and their natural desire for freedom. On the contrary. The laws that we adopt shall protect and take care of those who want to live in freedom and democracy. The laws shall guarantee our citizens that their fundamental rights and freedoms will be respected, and that they will be protected against those who violate their rights or do not respect them.

The laws shall ensure our safety, our health and the protection of the environment we live in. The laws shall take care of the old and young, while creating space for access to education, information, and providing good care to those who are in need.

The laws shall also impose as little limitation as possible on of free and creative spirit, entrepreneurial spirit and possibilities of original approaches and presentations.

It is difficult to draft and approve a good piece of legislation and it requires diligence, experience and humbleness. To abolish a bad or needless act may be even more difficult. I am not certain what is the status quo here, but it seems to me there is an ever-growing number of useless acts and regulations these days back home.

It is primarily the role of lawmakers to remind themselves that each and every act is merely an imperfect description of how we want the society to function. In democracies, democratically. In dictatorships, non-democratically.

And because we all know that every description of objective reality and every list of regulations are bound to be imperfect, the fundamental role of democratic principles or the definition of the fundamental values and respect for such values, is in the spotlight again.

For this reason, I am convinced that the role of democratic parliaments and the role of democratic legislative courts, the role of upper and lower chambers around the world lies not only in the adoption of legislation, but also in the defence of democratic principles.

The defence of democratic principles is nothing else than justification and defence of independent democratic souls of our societies.

I am convinced that it is the duty and obligation of every democrat to support everybody who defend democratic principles and who often times build democracy under difficult conditions.

Hence I am very glad we were able to visit you within the framework of our Senate parliamentary diplomacy in order to exchange our experience and extend mutual co-operation.

In his famous speech titled “Ich bin ein Berliner” in 1963, the American President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (JFK) clearly expressed his critical stance on communism and oppressive regimes and supported the citizens of West Berlin. Freedom is indivisible, he said, and as long as there is a single person enslaved in the world, we are not free either. By claiming “Ich bin ein Berliner”, he raised his voice in support of West Berlin and the ultimate value of freedom.

Please let me also express in person my support to Taiwan and the ultimate value of freedom and conclude today’s speech at your Legislative Yuan in Taiwan with perhaps a more humble, but equally strong statement: “I am a Taiwanese.“ *Wo shi Taiwan ren.*

I wish you independent, true and just future.