

*Press Release, October 11, 2017, Prague*

## **The 21st Forum 2000 Forum was held in Prague and other cities**

The 21st Forum 2000 Conference Forum titled "*Strengthening Democracy in Uncertain Times*" ended yesterday in Prague. The conference has presented more than four dozen expert panels, discussions and meetings this year. Among almost 170 delegates this year was also the Prince Albert II of Monaco, who participated in a lecture on sustainable development at the Faculty of Law of the Charles University. In addition to issues related to the state of democracy, the conference also focused on the topics of modern technology, the current state of media in the world or the role of young people in political decision-making. Special attention is paid to China and Venezuela as well as to Russia and Turkey. Part of the conference was also the first ever meeting of the Coalition for Democratic Renewal.

The 21st Forum 2000 Conference was completed with a **Closing panel** attended, among others, by former President of Bolivia Jorge Quiroga Ramírez, historian and editor of the Polish daily Gazeta Wyborcza Adam Michnik, or director of People in Need Šimon Pánek. The panel also addressed the risk of populism or the search for ways to improve the functioning of civil society. "*We need to strengthen civil society, particularly the organization of young people - and promote citizenship with women,*" noted another panelist, president of Civic Movement, Senegal professor Penda Mbow.

**On Tuesday**, the conference also offered several closed breakfast meetings, a lecture on the relationship between Austria and Europe of former Austrian President Heinz Fischer, or a panel dealing with the relationship between religion and democracy. Egyptian author and journalist Nafisa Al-Sabbágh said: "*Having religion in the public sphere is not fearful. Problems arise only when religion is used as a political instrument.*" The Carnegie Group, which has been striving to maintain peace in the world for more than a hundred years, has also had the series of meetings. On Tuesday morning, the **Coalition for Democratic Renewal (CDR)** was launched. CDR was based on shared concern about the current state of democracy in the world. The Prague Appeal, its founding document, has already been signed by more than 180 personalities, including intellectuals, politicians, lawyers and journalists, such as Garry Kasparov, Francis Fukuyama, Bernard-Hénnri Levy, Nathan Law, Anne Applebaum, Rosa Maria Payá, Ivan Havel or Richard Gere. Signatories gathered at the Conference for two internal meetings in order to discuss the future steps of the CDR. Participants agreed on working world-wide in cooperation with local and international organizations and focus among other things on young people and a role of media.

**On Monday** October 8, during the first working day of the Conference, among others, Secretary-General of the Organization of American States Luis Almagro, Spain's former Prime Minister Felipe González Márquez or Vice President of the Open Russia Vladimir Kara-Murza, jointly debated the state of the democratic world and the challenges the world faces not only in the context of current



situation in Venezuela or China. The conference also focuses on the issue of human rights, the role of information technologies in democratic societies and the danger of their abuse. As a part of the panel on China's political situation, Chinese billionaire Guo Wengui spoke via Skype, in order to reveal the corruption of the top Chinese leadership.

On Sunday, October 8, **the Opening** of the Forum 2000 conference on "*Strengthening Democracy in Uncertain Times*" honoured the late Chinese human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo. Xiao Qiang, the founder of the China Digital Times and one of the dissidents, has spoken about his actions towards freeing Internet environment in China. The musical accompaniment was performed by Venezuelan piano virtuoso and human rights activist Gabriela Montero and the Cuban dissident band Porno para Ricardo.

**The Festival of Democracy** - which is the accompanying program of the Conference, launched on October 5 - has lately been followed by the "Festival Monday" on October 9. The festival offers visitors more than 80 lectures, seminars, discussions, exhibitions or musical performances until October 12th. Taking place at the Vaclav Havel's square, the Festival of Democracy also presents several non-profit organizations and partners to the festival.

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