

ПОСТОЯННО ПРЕДСТАВИТЕЛСТВО НА
РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ ПРИ СЛУЖБАТА НА ООН И
ДРУГИТЕ МЕЖДУНАРОДНИ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ В ЖЕНЕВА



MISSION PERMANENTE DE
LA REPUBLIQUE DE BULGARIE AUPRES DE L'ONU ET
LES AUTRES ORGANISATIONS INTERNATIONALES A GENEVE

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STATEMENT

BY

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**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

**FIRST SESSION
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
GENEVA
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Mr. President of the Council,
Madam High Commisioner,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to speak before the new Human Rights Council today.

President de Alba, let me first congratulate you on behalf of the Bulgarian Government on your election to this high office. A word of sincere appreciation also to our Swiss hosts, for their contribution to the success of this momentous event.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to pay special tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to President Eliasson, to the Co-Chairs Ambassadors Kumalo and Arias, and to all those who worked hard throughout the process that brought us all here. And I believe we all came here hoping that we can make a significant step forward in the matter of defending human rights and upholding human dignity.

Bulgaria welcomed the adoption by the General Assembly Resolution 60/251, which confirmed the commitment of the international community to ensure the **effective enjoyment by all of all human rights**.

It is our genuine wish that the Council will indeed preserve and build on the undeniable achievements of the Commission on Human Rights, while we all should share the responsibility for redressing its past shortcomings.

In this respect I am convinced that the new Council would fulfill the high expectations of the international community only if its work is based on the principles of universality and impartiality. The Council should function as a forum for constructive international dialogue and cooperation, and strive to provide that civil, economic, political, social and cultural human rights, including the right to development, are equally accorded serious consideration.

The interdependence between development and human rights is self evident. Without development there can be no enjoyment of human rights. And without human rights, development would be unattainable. In this regard, human rights education is essential to the realization of both human rights and development. It contributes significantly to promoting equality, preventing human rights violations and enhancing wider participation in the decision-making process.

We attach particular importance to the establishment of the system of the Universal Periodic Review as a new instrument at our disposal in dealing with human rights situations around the world. I feel especially encouraged by some ideas already voiced in this august hall by our partners for the proper functioning of this new mechanism.

We recognize the need to enhance the efficiency of the treaty bodies system, including through rationalization and streamlining of the reporting procedures.

The effective implementation of universally recognized human rights standards remains, however, the primary responsibility of states. We all have an obligation to guarantee the protection of human rights of all persons under our states' jurisdiction on the basis of non-discrimination and equality before the law. Special attention should be paid to the needs of the most vulnerable members of society.

Unfortunately, though the list of States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child is most impressive, children in many parts of the world continue to be victims of the worst forms of violence and exploitation. Child labour, the use of children as soldiers in armed conflicts, sexual abuse and exploitation of children and adolescents and their trafficking persist. More resources, both on the international and the national level, must be mobilized to combat such unacceptable practices.

The protection of the rights of persons with disabilities equally deserves particular attention. In this context, we fully support the work of the Ad-Hoc Committee on the elaboration of an international convention on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. We encourage it to continue its noble effort.

In accordance with the principle that all persons, regardless of their health status, should live in dignity and be able to fully enjoy all human rights, the Bulgarian government

adopted as its immediate priority the ensuring of equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. We are working on improving the Government's capacity to respond to their specific needs.

The prevention and eradication of the practice of torture in the world still remain one of the main challenges faced by the international community. It is our common duty to ensure adequate protection of all persons against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Bulgaria will support all international initiatives aimed at eradicating torture while ensuring effective remedies for its victims.

The growing number of victims of trafficking and their suffering are, likewise, of grave concern to us all. Trafficking is a form of denial of virtually all human rights and it requires a comprehensive approach by the international community based on shared responsibilities and coordinated efforts by states and international organizations. To achieve a sustainable solution, policies and programmes for prevention, assistance and protection of the victims of trafficking should be carried out, taking into account the socio-economic root causes of this phenomenon.

We are convinced that these important and serious issues would, amongst others, merit regular consideration by the new Council.

Mr. Chairman,

Another common responsibility that many countries share is the effective improvement of the situation and equal integration of the Roma in our societies.

In the past 15 years, during the process of transition towards a market economy, my country has undergone profound economic changes, which affected all segments of our society. Due to a number of objective reasons, large groups in society, including the Roma, suffered from certain unfavourable socio-economic trends, which rendered them vulnerable.

That is why improving the situation of the Roma is among the key priorities of the Bulgarian Government. We have developed relevant legislation, policies and programmes,

providing additional budgetary and other support for measures in the areas of education, health care, employment, social protection, housing and living conditions.

My Government joined the World Bank Initiative to declare the period 2005-2015 as the Roma Inclusion Decade. It was officially launched on February 2nd, 2005 in Sofia, where the prime ministers and other senior government representatives of the Decade Participating States from Central and Eastern Europe signed a Declaration stating their commitment to improving the status of the Roma and their equal integration in society. In less than two weeks from now Bulgaria will be assuming the Decade Chairmanship from our neighbour Romania with the ambition to continue, together with all our partners, the valuable cooperation in this field.

And before I conclude, Mr. Chairman, I would like to express Bulgaria's appreciation and strong support for the efforts of the High Commissioner and her Office.

I thank you.