



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!

STATEMENT

BY H.E. MR. ROSEN PLEVNELIEV,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

AT THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE 69TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 25 SEPTEMBER 2014

Mr. President,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me congratulate His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa of Uganda on assuming the presidency of the Sixty-ninth Session of the General Assembly. I extend also my warmest gratitude to His Excellency Mr. John Ashe for his work as President of the Sixty-eighth Session.

Over the last few months Bulgaria and the Balkans have suffered unprecedented floods. Thousands of people lost their homes, crops were ruined, and many innocent people died. In other parts of the globe, countries faced extreme draught and forest fires. Heavy storms were no longer news but everyday life. Nature once again reminded us that today political statements alone are not sufficient. For the sake of our children and our planet it is time we act. As a wise man once said: *"We did not inherit this earth from our fathers; we borrowed it from our children."*

Climate change needs to be urgently addressed. I would like to thank Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for having organized the Climate Summit. Bulgaria will actively support the completion of negotiations on the new, universal and legally binding Climate Agreement in 2015.

Bulgaria contributed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the development of the Post-2015 Agenda through its successful participation in the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The Group has fulfilled its mandate. The Group's Report together with the High-level Panel Report will be the leading documents for our future discussions as we enter the critical phase of the debate on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. It is crucial that all sides stay engaged and committed to the final goal – an ambitious and forward looking framework. No real transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda would be possible unless we address the loopholes of the current MDGs and build upon the lessons learned.

The new framework should be founded on the principles of respect for human rights, inclusiveness, good governance and the rule of law. Youth specific

targets on education, health and employment are of paramount importance as well.

Mr. President,

Development is unthinkable without peace and security. The illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine have become one of the most serious threats to peace and security in Europe since the Second World War. The security environment in the Black Sea region was seriously affected.

The illegal annexation of Crimea undermines the international order. After the Second World War we built our world on clear principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations. They were shattered to pieces in a matter of weeks. Bulgaria strongly supports the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine. My country does not recognize the illegal referendum in Crimea and condemns the annexation by Russia as violation of international law. Bulgaria joined the numerous co-sponsors of the General Assembly Resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

My country welcomes the cease-fire agreement and is looking forward to the implementation of the peace plan.

Bulgaria commends all international efforts for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. We welcome the strong engagement of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and the initiatives taken by the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as well as the efforts of the Contact group. Russia should stop arming and supporting separatists in Ukraine.

In a few days Ukrainians will vote for new parliament. They have every right to choose their own future. I sincerely hope that these elections will be a major step forward in building a democratic and prosperous Ukraine.

The signing and ratification of the Association Agreements of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia with the European Union is an important milestone in the process of their European integration. The positive change witnessed today on the Balkans would not have been possible without the engine of the European integration.

Mr. President,

The escalation of violence and the humanitarian situation in Syria continue to be a source of grave concern. Millions of refugees fled their homeland in quest for peace in the neighbouring countries. Hundreds of thousands lost their lives. Over ten thousand sought asylum in Bulgaria. A lasting solution to the conflict in Syria can only be achieved by an inclusive political process. We call on the Security Council to unite. The unity of the Security Council is crucial for the conflict to be resolved.

The Syrian crisis, along with the outbreak of violence and sectarian tensions in Iraq, have deteriorated the security and humanitarian situation in the entire Middle East region. Bulgaria strongly condemns the armed assault and killings perpetrated by the terrorist organization "Islamic State" against religious and ethnic minorities, and denounces the brutal execution of innocent people.

Bulgaria is an integral part of the broad international coalition against terrorism. Being a European Union and NATO member my country gives its political support as well as humanitarian and material aid, within the scope of its possibilities.

We welcome the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution on foreign terrorist fighters. Combating radicalization, supporting state-building in Iraq and cooperating with regional partners is essential. We welcome the election of Mr. Haider al-Abadi as Prime Minister and hope that under his leadership a government of broad representation will be established in order to preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country.

Bulgaria greatly values the UN's role in Iraq and appreciates the contribution of Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, former Bulgarian Foreign Minister, now Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

We stand for a just and lasting settlement of the Israeli – Palestinian conflict based on the "two-state solution" formula. This is only possible through direct negotiations, with no preconditions and in conformity with the relevant

international obligations. Any durable ceasefire should address both Israeli security concerns and Palestinian demands of lifting the Gaza closure regime.

Mr. President,

The adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty was a major achievement of the international community. Just over a year later, the threshold of fifty ratifications has been reached this morning. I am glad that my country is among those fifty states that have made the entry into force of this important legal instrument a reality. The Arms Trade Treaty fills a serious gap in international law. It establishes regulations for trade in conventional arms at global level. Now, its implementation and universalization are of utmost importance.

Mr. President,

Twenty-five years ago the Berlin wall fell and the democratic transitions in Central and Eastern Europe began. My country Bulgaria chose to become a modern European democracy. We put our country back on the path of freedom, independence, rule of law and respect for human rights. Our society has proven its firm commitment to the democratic values and principles. We witness similar political changes across South-Eastern Europe. The Balkan countries have become partners, sharing the same values and projects for the future. We build bridges of trust, friendship and mutual respect. We are working together for more connected, more competitive and prosperous Balkans.

Mr. President,

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are at the heart of my country's foreign policy. Bulgaria's commitment to advancing the human rights agenda throughout the UN system has been further strengthened with the successful Bulgarian Chairmanship of the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Third Committee) during the Sixty-eighth Session of the General Assembly.

Bulgaria is determined to further contribute to promoting and upholding human rights internationally as member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2019 – 2021 and would rely on partners' valuable support for its candidature.

My country welcomes the appointment of Prince Zeid of Jordan as the new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights – an excellent choice by the Secretary-General. We wish Prince Zeid all success in fulfilling his mandate.

We support the Secretary-General's Rights Up Front initiative on safeguarding human rights around the world. Bulgaria commends Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his insightful vision and global leadership with regard to this initiative and his valuable contribution to advancing the human rights agenda throughout the United Nations.

Bulgaria is concerned about the anti-Semitic incidents and attacks that have taken place recently, especially in Europe. As a country that has saved from deportation forty-eight thousand Bulgarian Jews during the Second World War, Bulgaria condemns strongly the recurrent trend of brutal and disgusting manifestations of anti-Semitism.

This year the international community celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which has set a universal standard for the effective promotion of children's rights. Bulgaria commends UNICEF for their enormous contribution over this period for improving children's lives and advancing the children agenda around the world. As a member of the Bureau of UNICEF's Executive Board this year, my country supports and actively participates in all efforts aimed at child protection and achieving results for children.

Mr. President,

My country is convinced that the UN reform process should continue in order to enhance the efficiency, representativeness and transparency of the entire system and to make it more adequate and responsive to the new realities. As a member of the Eastern European Regional Group, Bulgaria reiterates its position in favor of allocating at least one additional non-permanent seat in an enlarged Security Council for the Group. Bulgaria is aspiring to serve as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the term 2018 – 2019.

At the end of 2016 the second term of office of the current and highly respected Secretary-General H.E. Mr. Ban-Ki-moon will come to an end. My country greatly values his outstanding leadership and commitment. Bulgaria expects that, when the time comes, the UN member states will be able to elect a worthy successor. To that end, I would like to recall the relevant General Assembly Resolution, which states that in the process of identification and appointment of the best candidate for the post of Secretary-General due regard shall continue to be given to regional rotation and to gender equality. Bulgaria is convinced that the time has finally come for the East European Regional Group to be represented at the helm of the UN.

Thank you, Mr. President!