



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA



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STATEMENT

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA TO
THE UNITED NATIONS,

AT THE 42ND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND
DEVELOPMENT

AGENDA ITEM 4 "GENERAL DEBATE ON NATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN
POPULATION MATTERS"

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Madame Chairperson,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election and the excellent work you have done, together with the Secretariat, in organizing the current 42nd session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD). I would also like to wish you and all colleagues a successful outcome of the session and assure you of my delegation's full co-operation and support.

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made yesterday by the Czech Republic on behalf of the EU. I would like only to provide additional information on our national and regional experience on population matters and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

For more than two decades now Bulgaria has been experiencing negative population trends that are affecting our social systems to a greater extent, as compared to other European countries. Therefore, the demographic policy is among the priorities of the Programme of the Bulgarian Government. In 2006 Bulgaria developed a long-term national demographic strategy, namely **the National Demographic Strategy 2006-2020**. It is a fundamental and comprehensive document that incorporates the European Commission's recommendations on responding to demographic changes and the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994. The Government of Bulgaria considers the goals contained in the Strategy not only as a blueprint to reversing the negative demographic trends, while guaranteeing women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, but as being vital to improving the living standards of the Bulgarian people as well. The Strategy is aimed at achieving the following goals:

- Teaching the illiterates among the young generation to read and write, especially girls and young women belonging to vulnerable ethnic communities;
- Reaching a high level of education of the youngest - 85% of the youth aged 19-24 should have finished secondary school by 2015;
- Reducing infant mortality to 9.5 per thousand by 2015;
- Carrying out obligatory basic immunization of all children under the age of 1 and 99% coverage of the vaccinated by 2015;
- Preserving maternal mortality level below 12 per 100 000 until 2015;
- Achieving a 90% coverage of pregnant women by the health care system by 2015, ect.

Madame Chairperson,

In order to increase fertility and reduce mortality our **population policy** has developed to include: increase of the paid pregnancy and maternity leave until the age of 1 year of the child, increase of the amounts of single allowances for childbirth and upbringing and of monthly allowances for a child until completion of secondary education, provision of nursery schools and kindergarten, promotion of flexible working arrangements and introduction of a paid paternity leave, engaging unemployed childminders, including retired grandparents to look after their grandchildren etc.

In order to **reduce mortality** our demographic policy is aimed at improving and expending preventive health care services; opening of female and child health care centers and introducing free-of-charge examinations of pregnant women, nursing mothers, and newborn babies; screening for cervical cancer; providing mobile medical assistance to the population in remote regions and

to specific disadvantaged groups, and targeting HIV/AIDS prevention and education campaigns to young people, drug users and other risk groups.

Speaking about HIV/AIDS prevention and education of young people, I would like to point out that Bulgaria has developed a partnership with different organizations targeting young people and their health, education and welfare in order to improve the Bulgarian adolescents' sexual and reproductive health. In the framework of this partnership some successful projects are implemented. I would like to refer to one of them which has proved to be effective in using innovative methods of education on HIV/AIDS prevention, namely the peer-to-peer approach.

The peer education network called **Y-PEER Bulgaria** (Youth Peer Education Network Bulgaria) was established in 2000. It is developing successful youth-adult partnerships between peer educators and their "supportive adults" (trainers, teachers, parents, school directors, etc).

During the last nine years Y-PEER activities have expanded into 21 out of 28 administrative regions in Bulgaria and in more than 200 schools through their youth clubs. 1500 peer educators and trainers and more than 50 organizations are engaged in this project. The capacity building of Y-PEER Bulgaria has been supported by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Science, UNFPA, UNICEF, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), local authorities, NGOs etc.

Through various peer education projects Bulgaria is cooperating with countries from the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia by exchanging experience, knowledge and good practices. In October 2007 the *regional Y-PEER International Peer Education Training and Research Centre* was opened in Sofia. The Centre is supported by the National Center of Public Health Protection, the Programme "Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS", the Ministry of Health, the UNFPA and Y-PEER International Network. The Centre is connecting more than 5,000 young people from 42 countries - members of the network.

Madame Chairperson,
Distinguished colleagues,

In conclusion, I would like to point out that Bulgaria is committed to its responsibilities as an emerging donor. Promoting health services, education and training of specialists along with cultural diversity and tolerance as well as socio-economic reforms are the priority areas of the new Bulgarian development cooperation policy aimed at contributing to the achievement of the MDGs at a global level.

Thank you for your attention!