



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

STATEMENT

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Mr President,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by praising His Excellency Nassir Abdelaziz AL-NASSER for the steady stewardship as the President of the 66th session of the General Assembly. In your work, Your Excellency, you can count on the constructive engagement of the Bulgarian delegation. But allow me also to personally praise you for the theme which you have selected for this session.

I take this opportunity to also pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Joseph DEISS, for his outstanding leadership of the previous session's busy agenda.

Last, but not least, let me congratulate the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for his re-election at the helm of the United Nations.

Mr. Secretary General, you have proven yourself as a diligent, hard-working leader who believes strongly in consensus and harmony – qualities that the UN needs now in its top administrator and will undoubtedly need even more in the years to come.

Let me begin by welcoming the work of our delegations in **UN High Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases**. Cancer, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes are now responsible for more deaths than all other causes combined. Bulgaria welcomes the negotiated final document. Over 80% of cardiovascular and diabetes deaths, almost 90% of deaths from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and more than 2/3 of all cancer deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.

To quote the UN Secretary General's Report to the GA: *"Knowing how to reduce such diseases is not the problem; the problem is lack of action."* Focusing on this "new frontier" now is an important challenge that can be addressed only if we all work together.

Bulgaria also particularly welcomes the **High Level Meeting on Nuclear Safety and Security**. The effects of nuclear accidents have no respect for national borders. To adequately safeguard our people, we must have firm international consensus and action, as well as agree on stringent international safety standards. As many other IAEA member states Bulgaria considers nuclear power as a viable option to meet our energy needs. Nuclear energy has a key role for providing base load power to our economy with a share of 35% of the total energy mix.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we stand on the doorstep of **historic change in the Middle East**. Change, the scale of which can be only compared to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the sweeping transformation of Central and Eastern Europe after the end of Communism.

Both processes are quite different, but share a fundamental similarity — people have come out of the bondage of fear. Although the circumstances in each country are divergent, the root causes for what is happening in the Middle East are similar.

- Corrupt leadership breeds dissent and with no democratic process in place, this dissent pours out onto the streets;
- Young people want to be engaged in the future of their countries, not forced into a world of virtual reality and frowned upon by aging dictators;
- Millions of people who live on the brink of poverty and see a privileged few reap the benefits of economic freedom will demand fair economic opportunities for all.

Add to that the feeling of revival, the demand of millions of young Arabs to be respected not to be denied the opportunities that others have, not to be talked down or discriminated and you have the makings of a revolution of Arab dignity and self respect, a historic revolution indeed.

Human dignity is a right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I quote: *“all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”*

As change swept across the Middle East and North Africa, some leaders cringed in fear, others embraced it. Those who opposed their people are no longer in positions of power; their countries are moving on and looking to democratic elections. Those who embraced change have initiated far-reaching reforms and responded to the legitimate demands of their people. His Majesty King Abdullah of **Jordan** and His Majesty King Mohammed VI of **Morocco** need to be commended for their vision and willingness to reform. They are showing the way forward.

At the same time the international community has been appalled by the developments in **Syria**. Instead of responding to the legitimate demands of the Syrian people by fulfilling promised reforms, the government cracked down violently on protesters. They did not have unrealistic demands; they did not ask for anything out of the ordinary. According to the UN over 2600 people have been killed since March. The government in Damascus questions these numbers. Even if only one person had been killed, it would be one person too many. The responsibility for the repression lies squarely with the authorities and no one else.

I use this opportunity to call on President Assad -- who has made many promises to his people and the international community -- to come out from the shadows, change the constitution, dismantle the machinery of repression, and immediately call internationally supervised elections. The people of Syria have the right to elect their own government and hold it accountable. The time for transition has come.

Ladies and gentlemen,

at this session we welcomed the hundred-and-ninety-third member of the United Nations. Our hearts go out to the people of **South Sudan** who have struggled for independence and we commend the visionary leadership of their new government for paving the way for their independence in a peaceful manner.

We also welcomed the new representatives of **Libya**, free from the oppression of the Gaddafi dictatorship. It was at the gates of Beghazi in February that the international community, acting on a mandate of the UN Security Council, acted swiftly to prevent a massacre and protect civilians against attacks from their own government. The people of Libya proved that they can stand up and defend their right to freedom. Our thoughts go out to the families of all who lost their lives in this struggle, who fell victim to the crazed ambitions of a deluded dictator.

Bulgaria stands ready to assist the people of Libya in rebuilding their country. Our friendship is strong and has been tested through the years. We know first hand of the brutality that Gaddafi was capable of. The **five Bulgarian nurses** and a doctor who spent eight years of their lives in a Libyan jail, much of it on death row, are still haunted by their tortures. *"We died every time the cell door opened"* said one of them in an interview recently. Now safely back home they need to be able to close the chapter of their nightmares. Like the nurses -- innocent victims of a brutal dictatorship, the Libyan people do not want to see revenge, but justice. Such justice will be sought when the dictator and his cronies are brought before a court of law.

Ladies and gentleman,

No matter how successful we individually are, we cannot truly bear the fruits of our own development if we live in an insecure environment. Regional cooperation and good neighborly relations are vital for the wellbeing of our countries and our societies. With this introduction let me turn even closer to home -- **the Balkans**. Allow me to use this opportunity to reiterate Bulgaria's unfaltering commitment to the European future of the Western Balkans. So I will not tire to repeat exactly the same thing I said last year from this podium:

The European Union was created to make war impossible in a continent that has seen at least a century of conflicts. Europe shall not be whole and complete until our neighbours in the Balkans are not part of our Union.

It falls on us – those who joined the EU late, not by their own choice, but because of the ideological divisions of the Cold War – to say it loud and clear: to make war impossible in the Balkans we must see all countries that have emerged from former Yugoslavia be part of the European Union. This is our historic mission. It's our destiny.

This is why we will continue to work tirelessly to remove the obstacles to EU enlargement in the Balkans, to strengthen regional cooperation and develop good neighbourly relations in a region that has seen too much division. With particular vigor we will continue to encourage the EU facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Bulgaria welcomes the pragmatic approach taken by both **Kosovo** and **Serbia** during their first meetings. It is important that they build on this momentum and continue to engage in a constructive and pragmatic manner. All must show restraint and prevent the build-up of tension. This is vital for the security, prosperity and – ultimately, for the European perspective of the region.

Bulgaria will continue to contribute actively to regional reconciliation. Because we believe that our role in South East Europe and beyond is to bring people together, not divide them; to seek solutions, not watch from the sidelines.

We must constantly reaffirm our European commitment to bring in our neighbours in the Western Balkans into Europe, when they meet the criteria for membership. Our neighbours also must reaffirm their own commitment to undertaking often very difficult reforms, and to strengthening regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Bulgaria is a country that has had a proud but turbulent history. Our history teaches us that nations are strong when their **civic spirit** is strong. It teaches us that you must find pride not only in great historic battles and ancient legends, but in great feats of civic activism, in the standing up for your values and protecting your neighbors. One such inspiring example is that fact that the Jews of Bulgaria survived World War II because hundreds of religious and community leaders, politicians, ordinary men and women stood up and refused to be part of Hitler's madness.

I stand tall and proud of the spirit of my predecessors. Their example of tolerance inspires much more than the Medieval stories of greatness and empires that we have so many of in Europe.

Two days ago we celebrated our national independence day. After 500 years of foreign occupation and domination in 1878 Bulgaria reemerged on the map of Europe. Our full independence however came only in 1908, some 30 years after the re-establishment of the Bulgarian state.

My country today is the product of the traditions of Christians, Jews and Muslims who all form the fabric of the Bulgarian nation. This is our richness, this makes us quite unique in the Balkans. This is why we cannot remain uninterested in developments in the Middle East, particularly to the elusive prospects of peace between the people of Israel and the people of Palestine.

Over the course of the last year we have seen the tireless efforts of the **US administration and the EU High Representative for Foreign Policy** to find a way to resume direct negotiations. These efforts, including the agreed Quartet statement of today, need to be applauded, encouraged and supported by all.

It was in the United Nations in 1947 that the State of Israel was born. It was born as a home for the Jewish people, a beacon of hope to a community that has been persecuted and oppressed for thousands of years; becoming the only truly democratic country in the region.

Today this landscape is changing. Slowly but surely the region is moving towards democracy. Democracy, accountable government and the rule of law are ultimately in the long term interest of all -- Jews and Muslims; Arabs and Israelis.

The Palestinian people have a right to a state of their own. Indeed we -- the international community -- have an obligation to support the establishment of a viable and democratic, Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

A Palestine that lives side-by-side with the State of Israel;

a Palestine that lives in security and mutual recognition with the State of Israel;

a Palestine that has secure borders, based on 1967 with mutually agreed swaps.

Both Palestine, as the home of the Palestinian people, and Israel, the home of the Jewish people, must guarantee that all ethnic and religious groups have full rights and protection under law.

But let me also make one point very clear -- **to refuse the right of Israel to exist means to refuse the right of the Palestinian people to also have a state of their own**. I can accept criticism of the policies of any government, but I cannot stand idle when the right of existence is denied to anyone -- no matter their religion or ethnicity. To dismiss such policies in passing, would mean to fail the values of our civilization.

Bulgaria will never accept that and nor should any other nation in the global community.

Bulgaria believes very strongly that the definitive solution to peace can only come through direct negotiations. But direct negotiations can resume only on the basis of trust and a real understanding of the security concerns and the legitimate

aspirations of both sides. Rebuilding trust between both parties is a prerequisite to resuming negotiations. Unilateral action, changing the realities on the ground cannot be a substitute for negotiations. Obstacles should be overcome and preconditions should be removed. If the leaders of Palestine believe that settlement policy is an obstacle to peace, the leaders of Israel must refrain from such activities. To give peace a chance. If the leaders of Israel believe that no preconditions to a final settlement should be put in place, then the Palestinian leaders must refrain from such actions. To give peace a chance.

Bulgaria has recognised the Palestinian state in **1988**. We hold our friendship both with Israel and the Palestinian people dear. This is why we urge the immediate resumption of negotiations as the only road to peace. Bringing both sides back to the negotiating table remains our top priority. I am sure that the United States, working in concert with the European Union, can facilitate this process, based on a vision outlined by President Obama.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The challenges of peace in the Middle East today are challenges of leadership.

Allow me now to turn to my delegation's vision for the kind of leadership, the kind of **United Nations** we need for the next decade. Our organization, in its reform, must be adequate and accountable, brave and bold in its actions, credible and compassionate.

An organization created by 51 member states functions today with 193 members. In order for the UN to be adequate today its institutions need to be reformed, first and foremost, in the composition of the UN's main body guaranteeing international peace and security. We must build on progress achieved so far within the negotiations on the **Security Council** reform and move the process to a more result oriented phase. Bulgaria considers enlargement of the Council in its two categories - permanent and non-permanent members as one of the options that enjoys the support of a considerable number of delegations. The increase in the number of non-permanent seats should provide for a just representation of the Eastern European Group, whose membership has more than doubled over the last two decades.

Transparency is impossible without **accountability**. First, the UN must be accountable to its member states through a continued strive to improve management and the enforcement of strict budgetary discipline, especially in the current period of economic turmoil.

We, the member states, ought to be accountable to the UN by fulfilling all our commitments, including by paying our **financial contributions** to the organization fully, unconditionally and in time – a principle that Bulgaria upholds and adheres to: by June 2011 my country has paid all its due contributions for 2011 to the regular

budget, the Capital Master Plan, the tribunals and the 2010-2011 peacekeeping missions' financial period.

We all need to be accountable for our actions to future generations. It is easy to speak of “**sustainable development**”, but at the moment we are not even remotely close to making it a reality. On the contrary: the damage we have done to the planet's geology, climate and ecosystems for most of the last century is so significant that scientists are increasingly asserting that the human race has actually managed to push the Earth, way faster than usual, into a new, eventually more unstable and dangerous geological period.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We need both wise and courageous leadership from the UN in our efforts to guarantee **peace and security**. Wise so as to avoid the temptation to use force when it seems to get results faster than mediation and protracted negotiations. Courageous to take responsibility when the use of force is a must.

In this context, I would like to acknowledge the initiative of Turkey and Finland to introduce a resolution on the topic which Bulgaria readily co-sponsored.

The United Nations will benefit much from strengthening its cooperation with regional security organisations. The cooperation with NATO in Afghanistan is an excellent example. International support has to continue beyond 2014. We were all saddened by the brutal murder of a great Afghan leader -- former President Rabbani. His work must inspire us to continue supporting the Afghan government 's efforts at reconciliation and reintegration.

It is high time for bold and decisive actions in the field of **disarmament** and **nonproliferation** as well. It is the legal and moral obligation of all of us to honor the commitments undertaken with the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Outcome document of the 2010 Review Conference. A strengthened and robust NPT regime is in the interest of all States, especially with the growing risk of non-state actors getting access to weapons of mass destruction. All States Parties, including DPRK, are bound by the NPT regime. Leaving the NPT should not be without consequences.

Cooperation with IAEA is also essential. As long as Iran continues to not provide greater transparency of its nuclear activities, the concerns of the international community will remain valid. Full compliance with the Security Council resolutions and with the provisions of the IAEA safeguards agreement is paramount for the diplomatic solution of this case.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The sad anniversary of the **9/11** attacks in New York we commemorate this year, the more recent tragic events in Oslo, Mumbai and other cities of the world prove that

terrorism is a global cancer that does not discriminate against developed or developing countries and societies. Its eradication requires decisive actions. The successful conclusion of the negotiations on the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism has Bulgaria's full support.

Bulgaria attaches great importance to the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations and the only international court of universal character with general jurisdiction. We welcome the fact that the Court has acquired a solid reputation as an impartial institution with the highest legal standards that enjoys the trust of the Member States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I opened my presentation by focusing on the challenge of tackling non-communicable diseases. Human suffering caused by various illnesses is further exacerbated due to the effects of the series of global crises in food, finance and energy and the threats associated with climate change. Taken together, these and other new challenges impede progress towards the achievement of the **MDGs**.

Our world today faces challenges that will shape its tomorrow. We need to be able to meet these challenges in a bold manner, with a clear vision for the future and tackle them together as a global community of nations.

Thank you!