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STATEMENT

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA MR. ROSEN PLEVNELIEV
DURING THE 67TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF UNITED NATIONS

NEW YORK, 25 SEPTEMBER 2012

**Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honour for me to speak from this podium for the first time since I took office last January. President Jeremic, may I congratulate you on assuming the Chair of this highly representative body, and to wish you success in your challenging task. I wish to commend the work of your predecessor, H.E. Nassir-Abdulazis Al Nasser as President of the 66th session of the General Assembly. Let me also express our great appreciation to Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for his inspiring vision and leadership which guide the world organization to greater efficiency, reform and result-oriented action. I also wish to welcome the appointment of Mr. Jan Eliasson from Sweden as Deputy Secretary General of the UN.

Our time is marked by historic shifts and achievements in science, technology and communications which shape global economy and politics, also bearing an impact on every human being. More and more nations in the world have now opted for open, free and democratic societies based on the rule of law and good governance. But these historic transformations do not always bring more peace and stability. On many occasions we still face extreme violence and bloodshed, causing senseless loss of innocent lives, human suffering and destruction.

The main theme of this General Debate cannot be more relevant for us as political leaders. Dealing with violent conflict and promoting peace, security, development and human rights have always been at the core of the United Nations. At the High Level meeting yesterday we have confirmed our credo that **the rule of law** forms the basis of a peaceful and predictable system of international relations. As conflicts nowadays have become more complex, we share the view that mediation and good offices should be a tool of preference to deal with escalating tension.

Mr. President,

Delivering justice is vital for **addressing terrorism** - one of the ugliest and most despicable crimes against humanity. No cause whatsoever can justify indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians. Sadly enough, no country or human being today can feel safe or insured against this evil. Just a few weeks ago, at the Sofia synagogue, we paid tribute to the memory of five Israeli and one Bulgarian citizen who lost their lives in the shocking terrorist attack last July at the airport of Sarafovo, a lively tourist destination on our Black Sea coast.

From this high stage in the city of New York, a few miles from the September 11 Memorial, I now reconfirm our strongest condemnation of this awful crime. My country will spare no effort to bring the perpetrators and their masterminds to justice. The attack on our soil has made us stronger and more determined to align with others in implementing the UN Global Strategy against terrorism.

We condemn the violent acts committed recently in the name of defending religious beliefs. This is unacceptable. We urge all involved to show tolerance and avoid provocative actions which can be destructive to peace and stability.

Mr. President,

For more than a year now the continuing **brutal violence in Syria** is raising our extreme concern. Each day brings testimonies of unacceptable levels of bloodshed and human suffering. The regime in Damascus has lost all legitimacy by waging a reckless war on its own people and by refusing to heed to the calls for a negotiated way out of the crisis. Due to the growing number of refugees, the humanitarian situation is deteriorating by the day and the stability of the neighbouring countries is at risk. Bulgaria condemns these gross violations of basic UN principles and of international humanitarian law. We call for full accountability for the perpetrators, including by bringing them before the International Criminal Court. My country subscribes to the actions of solidarity undertaken by the European Union and its members in providing relief to the suffering civilian population through urgent humanitarian assistance.

It is regrettable that despite the active involvement of the United Nations the international community has so far failed to ensure compliance by the Syrian authorities with the peace proposals elaborated through international mediation. Bulgaria gave full support to the diplomatic efforts performed by Mr. Kofi Annan and welcomed the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria.

While violence and bloodshed should be stopped immediately, we call for the start of a transition towards an inclusive and representative democratic rule in Syria which would guarantee the rights of all citizens, regardless of ethnicity or religion. Bulgaria has supported the Syrian opposition groups in their efforts to unite over an alternative to the current regime, based on the vision of a new democratic state which will be a welcoming home to all Syrians.

Promoting just, inclusive and transparent societies supports the process of democratic transition, known as **the "Arab spring"**, which has swept across the Middle East and North Africa. Bulgaria welcomes the steps made by several countries on the path to constitutional and political reforms and we trust that those are now irreversible.

At the same time the need to reactivate the **Middle East Peace Process** seems now more pressing than ever. Bulgaria looks forward to the resumption, in good faith, of the direct negotiations and expects both parties to demonstrate their continued commitment to a peaceful solution respecting

the legitimate interests and sensitivities of the Israeli and Palestinian people. All efforts should be made to create an environment conducive to a comprehensive peace settlement based on the two-state solution. In this respect, we urge both the Palestinians and the Israelis to refrain from any unilateral actions which could be destructive to the peace process.

Mr. President,

Disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are areas which continue to demand strong political will and action by the international community. It is essential that we continue to strengthen the comprehensive regime of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and of other major international instruments such as the Chemical Weapons Convention. With regard to conventional arms, Bulgaria consistently supports the negotiation process leading to the adoption of a legally binding and robust in substance Arms Trade Treaty

Along with others, we believe that **Iran's full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency** is of paramount importance. The government in Tehran must show greater transparency of its nuclear activities and to fully comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions. We look to a resumption of the high-level negotiations on the future of Iran's nuclear program and a clear demonstration of political will by the Iranian authorities to undertake concrete confidence-building steps and address the concerns of the international community.

Bulgaria highly values the role of the **Human Rights Council** as the primary body of the United Nations for the protection and promotion of human rights. I am delighted to announce that my country will be seeking, for the first time, **election to the Council for the period 2019-2021**.

Over the past two decades Bulgaria has gone through a successful transition from totalitarian rule to a functioning democracy with an open market economy and a vibrant civil society. It has been a difficult, dramatic and sometimes turbulent journey. I think our greatest achievement in this process is to have preserved the long-standing tradition of tolerance and dialogue between ethnic and religious communities within the Bulgarian society. This tradition can be aptly illustrated by a glimpse of the centre of our capital, where 4 temples of different religions – Islam, Judaism, Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, coexist peacefully surrounded by archaeological monuments of several ancient civilizations.

It is in this spirit that we stand ready to share the experience from our road to democracy with other countries undergoing similar challenges. More than a year ago Bulgaria initiated **an international forum called the "Sofia Platform"**, providing a useful venue for dialogue, exchange of views and best practices among government officials, experts, civil society and NGO representatives focusing on the transition processes in Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Middle East. This forum has shown that though the historical, cultural and political realities vary in different countries and regions, conclusions and lessons learned can be relevant in the field of national reconciliation, rule of law, institution building and security sector reform.

Mr. President,

Bulgaria maintains its unwavering commitment to the process of EU enlargement involving all our neighbouring countries from South Eastern Europe and the Balkans. We confirm our conviction that all states from the region should one day become part of the EU, on the basis of their own merits and fulfilled criteria in the negotiations process. At the same time pursuing the national reform agendas, solving outstanding issues and building regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations in accordance with the European standards, is of direct benefit to all countries of the region and their European perspective. All of us in South East Europe are

interested to promote business and human contacts with our neighbours, develop transborder projects and facilitate travel, build railways and highways, develop communications and regional energy and transport infrastructures as part of the pan-European networks. This is why we need to make best use of existing regional bodies, such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the South Eastern European Cooperation Process with its Regional Cooperation Council.

Mr. President,

A few months ago, at **the Rio+20 Conference** we made a good start on the path to a “greener” and safer world. The outcome document points to sustainable development as the only possible way forward. The ‘triple-win’ policies envisaged in the final document “The future we want” seek to advance social development, economic growth and environmental sustainability all at the same time. Our task now is to focus on the Conference follow-up and deliver. The General Assembly should discuss the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals to be integrated into the UN development agenda beyond 2015. We see an **important role for the ECOSOC** in this process and we stand ready to contribute, taking the opportunity of our current membership in this Council.

In the context of the UN development agenda, let me stress that Bulgaria, as an EU member, is deeply committed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, and is working to gradually increase its share as a donor of development and humanitarian aid, in compliance with undertaken commitments. During this session Bulgaria will sign the Food Assistance Convention.

Being myself a strong supporter of greater focus on education as a key area for sustainable development, allow me to express my high appreciation for the **initiative of the Secretary General “Education First”**. I am convinced that in a knowledge-based network of economies, education is the best investment in order to prepare young generations for global citizenship. We welcome the designation of UNESCO’s Director General Mrs. Irina Bokova as the Executive Secretary for this initiative. In view of her outstanding performance so far, Bulgaria advocates **Mrs. Bokova’s re-election for a second term at the helm of UNESCO** in the period 2013-2017.

We highly value UNICEF’s noble mission to promote children’s rights, safety and well-being. Over the past few years the role of UNICEF in Bulgaria evolved from the usual technical assistance to strategic partnership with the government in order to promote fundamental reforms. In November this year my country will host a UNICEF-sponsored High-Level Regional Conference on child care system reform.

Finally, let me assure you that Bulgaria will continue to give its full support to the noble cause of building a stronger rule-based multilateral system with enhanced role of the United Nations in its centre. Success on this path will be achieved only by working together.

Thank you for your attention.