



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

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STATEMENT

BY H. E. ROSSEN PLEVNELIEV,

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AT

THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 68TH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. President of the General Assembly,

Mr. Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am truly honoured to address this distinguished forum on behalf of the Republic of Bulgaria. Let me convey my congratulations to His Excellency Mr. John Ashe on his election to preside this 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Bulgaria welcomes the topic selected as timely and relevant and wishes you, Mr. president, every success in steering the deliberations of this key body through the challenging agenda of the session.

Some years ago, a 16 year-old Bulgarian boy, writing a school report on the Millennium Development Goals, compared the world's development model to a colourful carpet in which some colours, threads and stitches were missing making it look unfinished, patchy and ragged.

Indeed, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals resembles an unfinished work. Undoubtedly a lot has been achieved in the global fight against poverty and underdevelopment, progress has been unsteady and limited. It is hard to accept nowadays that more than one billion people, including children, still suffer from extreme poverty and malnutrition, millions of children are deprived of education and access to sanitation; basic health services for many women and new born babies remains a remote luxury. Disparities in wealth distribution, quality of life and personal opportunities have become more extreme across the globe. Climate change and environmental degradation have reached an alarming level and require our urgent collective response. The well-being of future generations is at risk due to the irrational management of natural resources.

Despite our efforts wars and armed conflicts continue to rage in our immediate neighbourhoods, causing thousands of deaths and leading to humanitarian crises and human suffering; we continue to witness violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms; neighbouring countries turn their backs to each other refusing to work together for a better future.

We, the countries of the world, must mobilize all available means and resources to finish what we have started in order to achieve truly sustainable results for humanity and our planet.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The situation in Syria continues to be a major cause of concern and a risk to regional and global security. Bulgaria strongly condemns **the chemical attack of August 21** that took the lives of thousands of innocent people including children. The use of chemical weapons in Syria constitutes a blatant violation of international law, a war crime, and a crime against humanity.

There is strong evidence to substantiate the assertion that **the Syrian regime is responsible for these attacks**, as it is the only party that possesses chemical weapons agents and means of their delivery for an attack of that scale.

There can be no impunity, and the perpetrators of this heinous attack must be held accountable. Bulgaria, who is one of the countries that signed a letter urging the UN Security Council to immediately refer the situation in Syria to the Prosecutor of the **International Criminal Court**, joins similar calls, coming from the UN Secretary General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

My country **welcomes the Framework agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation** to place Syria's chemical weapons arsenal under international control with a view to its swift and secure destruction, and joins them in demanding that the Syrian regime provide the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons with immediate access to inspect any and all sites in Syria. We call on the UN Security Council to unite and shoulder its relevant responsibilities under the Charter.

The use of chemical weapons **should not divert attention from the persisting gross violations of human rights and continued human suffering**. To the contrary, the created momentum should be used to move towards a lasting political solution to the conflict through the resumption of the Geneva process and with the active involvement of the United Nations.

The worsening humanitarian crisis requires joint coordinated action to alleviate the suffering and help those in need. **Bulgaria has provided humanitarian assistance** to ease the plight of refugees in neighbouring countries. Situated in the not far from region, my country is also affected by the daily influx of refugees from Syria. Despite its financial restraints, the Government has adopted an emergency plan and has provided additional resources in order to guarantee adequate accommodation and services to Syrian refugees. We count on the assistance provided by our partners and the humanitarian bodies of the UN system.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We expect that Iran will demonstrate a clear political will and address the concerns of the international community by providing credible evidence of the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. In this respect, Iran's full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency is of paramount importance. The

government in Tehran must show greater transparency in its nuclear activities and should fully comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions.

Bulgaria welcomes the successful adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty regulating international trade in conventional weapons and looks forward to its prompt entry into force. We hope that this new international instrument will very soon become an effective tool in limiting the illicit arms flow to conflict zones, thus consolidating peace and security.

My country is encouraged by the resumption of the direct peace talks between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority at the initiative of Secretary Kerry, the Quartet and the concerned parties. We expect both sides to demonstrate perseverance and commitment to a peaceful solution, to respect each other's legitimate interests and to refrain from unilateral actions that could undermine the process. Negotiations are the best way forward towards the ultimate goal - a just, comprehensive and lasting solution on the basis of the two states formula.

Bulgaria welcomes the appointment of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria Mr. Nickolay Mladenov as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). His mission in Iraq is an important contribution to the peace-building and restoration process of this friendly country and to the stability of the region, as a whole.

Mr. President,

Bulgaria condemns terrorism as one of the most horrific crimes and challenging threat to international peace and security. Terrorism has no face, no name, no color or religion. It strikes unexpectedly and scars the lives of everyone it touches. These days terrorism struck again in Nairobi, Kenya. On behalf of Bulgaria I present my deepest condolences to the people and the Government of Kenya.

On July 18th 2012 a terrorist attack claimed six innocent lives at a Bulgarian airport. This incident changed Bulgaria forever and is a reminder that the fight against terrorism is a common cause, on which the entire international community must stay united. We believe that the perpetrator of the ominous terrorist act in Burgas will be brought to justice soon. Bulgaria is grateful for the moral support and solidarity, as well as for the practical assistance of other UN member states in the investigation of this horrific crime. The critical role of the international cooperation in this field once again points to the necessity of a prompt finalization of the negotiations on a draft Comprehensive Convention to Combat Terrorism.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Take a look at what Europe has achieved in the last century. From a continent in ruins, torn apart by wars, we, Europeans, have created an area of peace, security and prosperity. Enemies have become friends and allies, united for the better future for their children. Today, in the European Union we have harmonized regulations, we are sharing a single market all this underpinned by our common values.

The last twenty-five years of the history of the Balkans are another great example of what can be achieved when neighbours work together towards a common goal.

Building trust, good neighbourly relations, stability and security in **South-eastern Europe and in the Black Sea region** is among the priorities of Bulgaria in the area of regional cooperation. My country remains strongly committed and will continue to support the efforts of our partners from the Western Balkans to meet the EU membership criteria and take their legitimate place in the united European family.

European Neighbourhood Policy remains one of the most efficient instruments of the European Union to deepen cooperation with Europe's neighbours and ensure peace and stability. Bulgaria attaches particular importance to the Eastern dimension of the Policy which provides us with the necessary tools to enhance relations with the countries of the Black sea region and members of the Eastern Partnership.

If common borders and geographical proximity make us neighbours, shared cultural heritage is what makes us a family. This year we, the Slavic nations, celebrate together 1150 years since the mission of the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius to Great Moravia. Almost twelve centuries ago they bestowed us with the invaluable gift of the first Slavic alphabet. Bulgaria welcomed the disciples of St Cyril and Methodius and adopted the Cyrillic script that helped us to preserve our national identity over the centuries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year the international community marks the 20th Anniversary of the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights and of the establishment of the Office of the High Commissioner for human rights. On this occasion Bulgaria wishes to emphasize its strong conviction that the human rights should remain one of the foremost priorities for the United Nations. Bulgaria is committed to working for the reinforcement of the universality and indivisibility of human rights and for mainstreaming of human rights perspective across the UN agenda. As a **candidate for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2019-2021**, Bulgaria will intensify its efforts in promoting the highest human rights standards both domestically and internationally. In this regard my country stands ready to contribute further through the nomination of the Permanent

Representative of Bulgaria to the UN, Ambassador Stefan Tafrov for the **Chairmanship of the Main Committee on Human Rights, Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Issues (The Third Committee)**. I wish to recall that the Bulgarian candidature was duly endorsed by the Eastern European Group.

Bulgaria welcomes the convening of the High level meeting on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals with regard to the persons with disabilities. As party to the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and as a member of the **Bureau of the CRPD Conference in New York**, my country is strongly engaged in promoting comprehensive and consistent implementation of the Convention at all levels, including by engaging disabled people's organizations as an important partner in this endeavour. We highly appreciate the work done by the co-facilitators from Spain and Philippines in ensuring an action-oriented outcome document for disability-inclusive development.

My country is convinced that the **course of reforms of the UN** should continue in order to enhance the efficiency, representativeness and transparency of the entire system of the United Nations. To meet the needs of our changing world, the UN should continuously adapt and improve. This includes a **revitalized UN General Assembly**, a **strengthened ECOSOC** and a **UN Security Council reflecting contemporary realities**. As member of the Eastern European Regional Group, Bulgaria continues to uphold its position as to the need of allotting at least one additional non-permanent seat in an enlarged Security Council for the Group, given the fact that in the last twenty years its membership has more than doubled.

Based on our long-standing engagement for the principles and values of the United Nations, I pledge that Bulgaria will be a responsible and reliable partner should it be elected as a **UN Security Council non-permanent member for the term 2018-2019**. We hope that the members of the United Nations will entrust Bulgaria with this responsibility and we stand ready to shoulder it in a spirit of partnership.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are still a long way from the future we want. The "Rio+20" Conference outlined a comprehensive agenda for further work to be completed in the three dimensions of sustainable development. The recently published report of the High Level Panel of eminent persons further contributed to the vision for a development agenda beyond 2015. It presents key proposals for transformative shifts and a global, people-centred and planet-sensitive agenda.

Bulgaria is actively engaged in the negotiation process on the new SDGs with a view to achieving a post-2015 framework that is **human rights-driven, builds upon the achievements of the MDGs and integrates poverty eradication and sustainable development in a single and coherent process.**

The new universal and legally binding **Climate agreement to be signed in 2015 should reinforce the overreaching post-2015 development agenda** and speed up the international community's efforts to introduce new sustainable models of growth.

Culture and education should be accorded their rightful place in the post-2015 development agenda. Here, UNESCO's role is of pivotal importance. Let me to use this opportunity to reiterate Bulgaria's strong support for the re-election of Mrs. Irina Bokova for a second term as Director General.

I would like also to express Bulgaria's admiration for the work done by UNICEF in service of the children of the world. As a member of its Executive Board, my country strongly supports the renewed focus on equity and providing special care for the most vulnerable and needy children in the agency's activities. Bulgaria highly values the partnership and policy advice provided by the UNICEF Office in Sofia in modernizing the national child protection sector and achieving more equitable and inclusive child care.

Today we are building the world of tomorrow. Young people should be at the heart of these efforts as active participants, and not as by-standers. For Bulgaria youth is a key stake holder of post 2015 development agenda.

Mr. President,

This year Bulgaria commemorates the 70th anniversary of the Rescue of the Bulgarian Jews from the death camps during the Second World War. Unfortunately, our country was in a situation where it could not do the same for the Jews from Northern Greece and parts of Yugoslavia. We deeply mourn their loss as well as that of all the victims of the Holocaust.

Recently citizens all over the world, Bulgaria included, have engaged actively in public life demanding more transparency, more accountability, more decency and more integrity from their politicians. In my country we believe that this renewed energy of civil society deserves to be encouraged and supported. I firmly believe that safeguarding human dignity is the ultimate goal of the United Nations as indeed of any genuine democracy.

Thank you very much for your attention!