



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA



STATEMENT

BY H.E. MR. RUMEN RADEV,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

AT THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE 72ND SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address this distinguished forum. I congratulate His Excellency Miroslav Lajčák on his election to preside over the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly and wish him every success in his mission. I would also like to extend my warmest gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson for his tireless work as President of the 71st Session in promoting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

This Session is a special one for my country as within its timeframe - in the first semester of 2018 - Bulgaria will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

This year the General Debate puts a special emphasis on our common strive for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet highlighting the importance of prevention, mediation, sustainable development, preservation of the environment and respect for human rights through a people-centered approach. The United Nations upholds our shared goals of peace and security, development and human rights.

Mr. President,

Conflicts in many parts of the world continue to undermine international peace and security and the fundamental values of humanity. Outbreaks of violence devastate local economies, trigger large movements of refugees and migrants, cause massive spread of diseases, famine and immense human suffering. Children are usually the most adversely affected in any crisis situation. Root causes of armed conflicts should be addressed in a more systematic way through ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law, improving the economic situation and promoting social inclusion.

“Leaving no one behind” and “reaching the farthest behind first” are not simply political declarations meant to invigorate Agenda 2030. If we are to transform our world by lifting it out of poverty, we need to implement fully the Sustainable Development Goals by promoting equality, inclusion and participation.

Protracted conflicts require a holistic UN response encompassing preventive diplomacy, mediation, peace-building and effective special political missions. This response is critical for restoring governance and stabilizing political, economic and social conditions in crisis and post-conflict countries.

Over the past several years the United Nations peace and security architecture has benefited from three peace and security reviews which, together with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, have provided a solid foundation for achieving peace and prosperity. In this regard, Bulgaria supports the ‘surge in diplomacy for peace’ which places prevention as an overarching priority of the UN’s work and sets the stage for the necessary reforms to sustain peace. Prevention and mediation are essential means of reducing human suffering, including in addressing the root causes of forced displacements, bringing humanitarian, development and peace-building efforts together.

The situation in the Middle East and North Africa remains of deep concern and should be addressed in a comprehensive manner but the international community should not be distracted from the urgent need to revive the Middle East Peace Process. Bulgaria reaffirms its position that the “two-State solution” formula is the realistic, just and lasting way to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is our belief that a solution which can fulfill the aspirations of both sides can be achieved only through direct negotiations, with no conditions and in conformity with the relevant international obligations.

Finding a political solution to the ongoing conflict in Syria and implementing a credible political transition in the country is essential for preserving the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian State. We support all actions aimed at achieving the earliest possible cessation to hostilities and conducting effective and constructive inter-Syrian negotiations in Geneva in order to achieve a lasting political solution to the crisis. We consider a political dialogue under the auspices of the UN as the only possible way to progressively improve the security situation in Syria and sustainably resolve the humanitarian crisis.

Another source of deep concern for my country is the situation in Eastern Ukraine which, regrettably, remains highly precarious and volatile despite periodic ceasefire agreements. We reiterate our call for a swift and full implementation of the Minsk Agreements which have no viable alternative. We consistently support the activity of multilateral formats, such as the Normandy Four and the OSCE Trilateral Contact Group considering their key role in

advancing the political and diplomatic efforts for a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Bulgaria is fully committed to the peace and stabilization process in Afghanistan and considers reconciliation as a major prerequisite for stability and sustainable development in Afghanistan and beyond. We encourage the National Unity Government to continue with the needed reforms in key areas such as good governance, the rule of law, credible electoral process, countering corruption and narcotics, tackling gender and social issues.

Disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are among the main pillars of international security and, hence, represent tangible aspects of the effort to achieve peace and decent life. Bulgaria reiterates its commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, as well as to the objective to attain a world free of nuclear weapons. This goal is achievable only through the participation of all States, the nuclear-weapon States in particular. We should aim at feasible but universal measures that will gradually and irreversibly lead to the final objective of a world without nuclear weapons. The next two steps in this direction could be the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty and the start of the negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear program concluded in July 2015 remains of historic significance. Its full implementation is of great importance for regional and global stability. My country reiterates its full support for Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Bulgaria categorically condemns the repeated nuclear tests and missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which lead to further escalation of the tensions in the region and undermine world peace and security. We call upon the DPRK to stop once and for all its nuclear and ballistic programs in a complete, irreversible and verifiable manner and to engage in a constructive dialogue with the international community. We reiterate our commitment to a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the situation.

The recent terrorist attacks are tragic reminders of the scale of the challenge ahead. Bulgaria shares the view that the newly established Counter-Terrorism Office marks a milestone in the efforts to improve United Nations efficiency in fighting terrorism by supporting the balanced implementation of the 2006 Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, strengthening coordination among the relevant UN agencies, funds and programmes, as well as promoting preventive measures that address the drivers of extremism.

Bulgaria is deeply concerned by the unprecedented scale of organized looting of cultural property in Iraq, Syria, Libya and other countries in conflict or post-conflict situation. We condemn illicit trafficking and illegal trade of cultural objects as a tactic of war and as a source of profit for financing terrorism. It is a threat that requires a global response. A number of legal instruments and resolutions have been adopted by UNESCO, the UN, the European Parliament, etc. We have laid the legal foundations and it is our common duty to ensure their full implementation. The Antiquities coalition, UNESCO's "Unite for Heritage" social-media campaign and other activities epitomize a very positive global trend for action aimed at preservation and protection of the world's cultural heritage.

Mr. President,

International migration is a global phenomenon and only through joint efforts, such as the Global Compact on Migration, we can ensure a balanced approach which includes respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, as well as effective border management and readmission. States have rights and responsibilities to manage and control their borders as a central element of their national security. Strict border control is of utmost importance, in particular in the context of preventing irregular migration and eradicating human trafficking. For Bulgaria the top priority is the effective management and control of the EU's external border allowing for the smooth functioning of free movement within the European Union.

Climate change continues to represent one of the biggest challenges of our time. Not only it impedes the well-being of our countries but also poses security threats to many of them. Bulgaria stands by its obligations undertaken by the Paris Agreement and believes that only a universal approach to its implementation can achieve the goals of the UN climate change agenda.

Mr. President,

Bulgaria is strongly committed to the promotion of human rights and is actively involved in a number of intergovernmental processes dedicated to the advancement of the human rights agenda globally. As co-chair of the Group of Friends of Children and the Sustainable Development Goals at the UN, Bulgaria strongly advocates for integrating children's rights in all major intergovernmental processes as the real agents of positive social change. As President of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the period 2017 - 2018 Bulgaria actively promotes the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others.

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

In the last few decades the UN has made crucial steps to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. These efforts should be further strengthened in order to achieve tangible results for women and girls on the ground by eliminating all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination. Ensuring equal rights for women and men should be an integral part of everyday policies in all spheres of life.

Promoting equality, countering discrimination and ensuring respect for human rights are key to achieving lasting peace and sustainable development and we believe that the protection of human rights should be placed at the center of all action undertaken by the UN.

Mr. President,

The world is currently facing enormous challenges, maybe the greatest that humanity has ever encountered, and we, the Member States of the United Nations, must provide the solution. It is time to take action.

Thank you, Mr. President!