

STATEMENT OF H.E. MS. DEYANA KOSTADINOVA, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA TO THE UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA, AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 67TH SESSION OF THE UNHCR EXCOM

4th October 2016, Geneva

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me start with congratulating Mr. Filippo Grandi on his election as UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the leadership shown during the first year. We assure him of our full support and collaboration.

Bulgaria fully aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union to which I would like to add some points in my national capacity.

Mr. Chair,

Bulgaria welcomes the recent adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants at the historic UN Summit. The Declaration contains tangible commitments based on shared responsibility and solidarity and makes a clear distinction between refugees and economic migrants.

The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework creates the necessary conditions for enhancing the refugees' protection and for providing support to host countries while addressing their legitimate security concerns. Bulgaria fully supports the efforts of the UNHCR to develop and operationalize in close coordination with relevant states the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework taking into account the specific context of different refugee situations. We are also looking forward to participating in the forthcoming negotiation process on a Global Compact on refugees.

Mr. Chair,

As part of the global efforts to tackle refugee crisis, Bulgaria has launched its first National Resettlement Program. The Framework of the National mechanism was developed with a view to implementing the commitments of Bulgaria to resettle 40 persons in 2016 and 50 - in 2017.

Our efforts are also focused on vulnerable persons with special needs. Aiming to facilitate the social adaptation and cultural orientation of asylum seekers, we take a wide range of measures such as:

- ensuring an effective and appropriate mechanism for identification of vulnerable persons;

- using tools for an effective and personal approach to satisfying the special needs of vulnerable persons during reception and in the asylum procedure;
- referral of asylum seekers to care and services and providing them with access to social assistance, health and psychological care, as well as to the labour market;
- facilitating the inclusion of asylum seekers in the national education system through the organization of educational courses in Bulgarian language, social and cultural orientation.

Mr. Chair,

We must not forget that children are the most affected by conflicts and protracted crises. It is not only our responsibility but also our moral duty to prevent a lost generation. Bulgaria pays particular attention to the specific needs of migrant children. We have recently expanded our national guardianship system to include unaccompanied and separated minor refugees.

Although Bulgaria is not one of the most heavily affected by the refugee flow, it faces serious challenges. At the end of August 2016, the number of persons in the procedure for granting international protection was 12116, which represented a dramatic increase of more than 50% compared with the same period last year. The increase of migratory pressure over the past months, coupled with a decrease in applicants leaving our reception centres, has led to a strong pressure on our accommodation system. As of the end of September our capacity is full to 103% and we expect that the trend of an increase of asylum seekers will continue. Despite the unceasing pressure on the Bulgarian asylum and reception system, Bulgaria remains committed to providing support to those European and non-European countries which are the most affected by the migration crisis.

In conclusion I would like to express our satisfaction with the active cooperation between the Bulgarian asylum authority and the UNHCR Representative in Bulgaria on issues related to the quality of the asylum procedure, victims of sexual and gender-related violence, unaccompanied minors, establishment of a mechanism for identification and referral of vulnerable persons, etc. We have also reinforced our efforts to expand the partnership network of national and international NGOs.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.