

Check against delivery!

**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 70th SESSION OF
THE UNHCR EXCOM**

9 October 2019, Geneva

Thank you, Mr. Chair!

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made by the EU.

We note with deep concern the continuing existence of situations that force people to run away from their homes. We strongly believe that solutions exist and we must stay united on their behalf.

The international efforts in addressing the root causes of forced displacement should be collective, comprehensive, inclusive and multidimensional. They should integrate the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and reflect the complicity of our interdependent world. We put emphasis on preventive diplomacy, early warning and preparedness of the national systems to react in emergency situations.

The first Global Refugee Forum is an important event with the potential to propose solutions and an opportunity to share good practices and experiences, to build upon the present efforts and demonstrate solidarity. The application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) has already generated positive results and Bulgaria welcomes and supports the countries applying it.

Mr. Chair,

Turning to the High Level Segment on Statelessness, we are distressed to hear that today millions of people around the world are denied a nationality. Statelessness is a legal anomaly and needs to be remedied.

The UNHCR “I Belong” campaign to end statelessness by 2024 and the Global Action Plan in this regard are initiatives, which go in depth of the problem in order to propose

solutions. The Bulgarian national legal regulation of statelessness issues corresponds fully to the measures and actions provided in the Action plan. Bulgaria acceded to the UN Statelessness Conventions in 2012.

From 2016, Bulgaria is among the states, which have introduced a national procedure for determining and granting statelessness status. I would like to thank the UNHCR for the support and assistance in that regard. **In September 2017, the Migration Directorate of the Ministry of Interior granted status to the first stateless person, and their number is currently 115.**

The procedure has been drawn up following an analysis of existing legislation, mechanisms and good practices. Particular attention has been given to the fundamental principles of the 1951 Convention, namely, non-discrimination, non-imposition of penalties for unlawful entry into the territory of the country concerned, non-refoulement. The Bulgarian institutions every day demonstrate that they do not and will not tolerate acts of discrimination or xenophobia – from the police officers to the highest governmental level.

The procedure is based on the principles of respect for the individual and dignity of the person, benevolent attitude during the fact-finding process, full awareness about the rights and obligations of persons at every stage of the procedure and full guarantee of the rights of those in most vulnerable situation – unaccompanied children, women and persons with disabilities. Once a statelessness status has been obtained, the stateless person has the opportunity to use a simplified procedure for acquiring Bulgarian citizenship. The procedure also introduces the right balance between respect for human rights, the public order and the national security requirements.

Due to constant analysis of the legal framework in 2017-2018 the procedure has been upgraded and more favourable regime to obtain statelessness status has been introduced. We are committed to continue our work on improving the legal and procedural framework and to make it practice-oriented.

With this in mind, we are making today our voluntary pledges to address statelessness even more effectively. We are committed to withdraw the reservation made by Bulgaria with regard to art. 31 of the 1954 Convention and to make a regular review of the relevance of the others reservations; to improve the procedure to grant statelessness status; and also to include stateless persons among persons subject to the National census.

Mr. Chair,

Bulgaria highly appreciates the humane mission of the UNHCR and reiterates its readiness to support to its programmes and activities.

We welcome the ongoing process of internal reform, including the decentralization process. We consider it as necessary and timely in the context of the implementation of the Global compact on refugees.

Thank you, Mr. Chair!

