



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
BULGARIA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**UNICEF Executive Board  
First Regular Session, New York, 7 – 9 February 2017 (CR 3 CB)**

**H.E. Mr. Georgi Panayotov, Ambassador,  
Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the UN**

**General Statements**

*New York, Tuesday, 7 February 2017*

**Mr. President,**

I would like to thank the Executive Director Mr. Anthony Lake for his inspiring presentation and to commend him for his strong leadership in advancing the children's agenda worldwide.

UNICEF's dedicated efforts for the promotion of children's rights are instrumental for ensuring a better life for every child. Bulgaria supports those efforts by all possible means and in the last couple of years has substantially increased its voluntary contributions to UNICEF. The largest part of Bulgaria's humanitarian and development assistance is realized through UNICEF. In 2016 Bulgaria contributed to UNICEF 265 thousand USD in total - for UNICEF's core resources, for joint projects in countries in Eastern Europe and for humanitarian aid in different parts of the world.

Bulgaria is strongly committed to promoting children's rights in all its national policies and its external action.

The child care reform in Bulgaria is steadily progressing and the process of deinstitutionalization is entering its final stage. Bulgarian authorities are determined to close down all institutions for children by 2025. Now the focus is on strengthening the system of integrated services in the community, preventing child abandonment, ensuring a family or family-like environment for every child, supporting parents and children at risk, promoting foster care, developing alternative social services, etc.

All child policies in Bulgaria follow a rights-based approach taking into consideration the best interest of the child principle and the specific needs of every child, with a particular focus on children and youth with disabilities.

The active involvement of civil society, social partners, media and the private sector is crucial for the success of the child care reform and for ensuring the social integration of children and youth leaving the institutions. A good example in this regard is the Social Teahouse entrepreneurship initiative in the Bulgarian city of Varna that provides support to children and youth raised in institutions through mentorship programmes helping them develop social skills and facilitate their successful integration in society. The Bulgarian Youth Delegates to the UN Ms. Alexandra Mircheva and Ms. Iva Tsoleva present here today are actively engaged in social entrepreneurship initiatives like this.

**Mr. President,**

In view of the increased migration flows since 2014 and considering the importance of education for the successful integration in society, the Bulgarian Government has recently amended the relevant legislation to ensure the right to education of all refugee and migrant children, including additional classes of Bulgarian as a foreign language and mother tongue language classes for children of different nationalities. Pre-school, primary and secondary education in all state and municipal kindergartens and schools in Bulgaria is free of charge for all children and students irrespective of their nationality. Refugee and migrant children are granted the same rights as Bulgarian citizens.

Education is central also to achieving the 2030 Agenda. As co-chair of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs Bulgaria continues to strongly advocate for integrating children's human rights in all intergovernmental processes at global level while at the same time acquainting children with the SDGs in schools at national level. 40 thousand children in 1500 schools in Bulgaria have already learnt about the SDGs since 2015 when UNICEF's World's Largest Lesson Global Initiative was launched in my country.

**Mr. President,**

UNICEF is a valuable partner and plays a crucial role in all major national initiatives related to children's rights. I would like to express Bulgaria's high appreciation to the Regional Director for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States – Madame Marie-Pierre Poirier – for her enormous contribution to improving children's wellbeing in our region during her tenure and to wish her all success in her new assignment. We would like to also welcome the new Regional Director Ms. Afshan Khan and assure her of our full cooperation and support.

**Thank you, Mr. President.**