



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BULGARIA**

TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-First Session, New York, 13 – 24 March 2017**

**Agenda Item 3 (a) (i) Priority Theme: Women's empowerment in the changing world of work
General Debate**

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

New York, 16 March 2017

Madam Chair,

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union.

Bulgaria is strongly committed to the promotion of gender equality and the realization of the human rights of women and girls. Gender equality and non-discrimination as envisaged in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are leading principles enshrined in the Constitution of Bulgaria, the national legislation and the statutory framework. In 2016 a new Law on Equality between Women and Men was adopted which establishes the principle of equality as a coordinated state policy and designates specialized bodies and mechanisms for its implementation at all levels.

In the changing world of work Bulgaria continues to pursue a consistent policy towards ensuring the right to work of women and women's empowerment by encouraging and facilitating women's employment. Action is taken to achieve gender equality in all areas of the social, economic and political life through effective gender mainstreaming in all government policies and strategies.

Gender equality is particularly important from an economic perspective considering that women's employment contributes immensely to the economic growth and in Bulgaria we can already see the positive results for the economy from the increased participation of women in the labour market in the last more than 25 years. This has been achieved through a number of strategic policy initiatives of the Bulgarian Government that have enabled women to pursue a career, including legislation, policy measures, targeted funding, etc.

The Bulgarian Government is constantly upgrading the legislation to include a gender perspective. The Law on Protection Against Discrimination and the Social Security Code were amended in 2012 to guarantee the principle of equal treatment of women and men who are self-employed, and to promote women's entrepreneurship when they are the less represented sex. Amendments were made also to the Insurance Code and the Social Security Code to guarantee the principle of equal treatment with regard to insurance services.

The National Strategy of Bulgaria for the Promotion of Gender Equality has also been recently updated with the aim to further strengthen the provisions related to equal treatment, equal access to resources, equal participation in decision-making and the successful personal and social development of the two sexes. The main priority areas as set out in the Strategy include increasing women's participation in the labour market, ensuring equal economic independence and eliminating the gender pay gap.

Special policies have been enacted recently in Bulgaria for ensuring the realization of the right to work of women, equal access to vocational education and professional training, equal employment, equal participation in the labour market and equal pay for equal work. The measures include introducing flexible working hours and professional mobility of the work force, enhancing professional qualifications and key competences, providing opportunities to combine career and private life and promoting the role of the father in care-work and sharing family responsibilities, including through legal incentives to take parental leave, improving the system of affordable and high quality social services, providing social benefits during leave, ensuring special protection for working women, especially for pregnant women, mothers of children up to three years of age and women undergoing in vitro fertilization treatment, as well as control on the implementation and compliance with labour legislation. Support for women is tailored to the specific difficulties they face in the labour market.

These measures are of particular importance not only for the economic empowerment of women but also for overcoming the stereotypes based on the perceived social roles of women and men.

The progress achieved in Bulgaria with regard to women's economic empowerment is the result of long-term and sustained efforts aimed at reducing the differences between women and men in employment, education and scientific research and at the same time promoting women's participation in management and high-profile careers, as well as in the political life.

The civil society in Bulgaria is also involved in all processes related to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and participates actively in the elaboration of legislation and policies for the implementation of the relevant international human rights instruments, as well as in all efforts aimed at eliminating discrimination and violence and fighting gender stereotypes, including through awareness raising, training and education.

Thank you, Madam Chair!