



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

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**UN Security Council Open Debate**

**Trafficking in persons in conflict situations: forced labour, slavery and other similar practices**

**New York, 15 March 2017**

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

**Mr. President,**

I would like to thank the UK for organizing today's Open Debate.

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

Trafficking in persons is a gross violation of human rights and also one of the most serious and lucrative forms of transnational organized crime with huge human, social and economic implications. The problem is further exacerbated by conflicts and the ensuing large movements of refugees and migrants who often become easy targets of different forms of exploitation. Thus, it is imperative to accelerate the global response to human trafficking through a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and cross-border approach.

In a globalized world, no country alone can disentangle the webs of traffickers. Better cooperation should be established among countries of origin, transit and destination on information sharing and on victim identification, support and reintegration.

In recent years Bulgaria has enhanced its law enforcement cooperation with countries in the European Union and other partners on irregular migration, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings. Bulgarian law enforcement authorities are active partners in numerous EU-led and transnational operations aimed to curb trafficking and smuggling and bring perpetrators to justice. As an external border of the European Union Bulgaria pays special attention to the nexus between conflict and trafficking in persons and actively supports UN-led efforts to put an end to political and security crises in the region which are conducive to migration flows.

The early identification of victims of trafficking in mixed migration flows is one of the main priorities of the Bulgarian National Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Persons which has established strong partnerships with the relevant UN bodies and other organizations aimed at ensuring effective management of migration processes and the respect of human rights of all persons.

The Bulgarian Government invests in building capacities to identify potential and actual victims of trafficking among migrants and asylum seekers, and provide adequate protection, in particular to children on the move.

Bulgaria is committed to the implementation of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Palermo Protocols which represent a solid foundation of international law in this area. Bulgaria welcomes also the first ever Security Council Resolution on Trafficking of Persons in Conflict Situations – Resolution 2331 adopted last December.

Bulgaria is one of the countries in Europe with the most comprehensive institutional framework to combat trafficking in persons. Bulgaria was one of the pioneers in Europe to adopt specialized anti-trafficking legislation in 2003. Bulgaria has penalized trafficking in line with the highest international legal standards and has made a step further by introducing more severe punishment for crimes involving children as victims. A National Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Persons is functioning at central level and there are 9 local Anti-Trafficking Commissions specialized in preventing trafficking among vulnerable communities. The new National Anti-Trafficking Strategy for 2017 – 2021 has a special focus on early detection and prevention.

Trafficking is a gendered phenomenon with the majority of victims being women and girls. In Bulgaria, like elsewhere in the world, the majority of victims trafficked for sexual exploitation are women and girls. In view of that the National Anti-Trafficking Commission of Bulgaria provides specialized assistance to women victims of trafficking in three government funded shelters.

Considering the particular vulnerability of children to trafficking annual prevention campaigns are organized in schools in partnership with local authorities, the academia, civil society and a network of youth volunteers. A specialized Coordination Mechanism for referral and assistance of unaccompanied children and children victims of trafficking has also been established. In the coming months the Bulgarian authorities will open also a new Specialized facility to provide protection, assistance and reintegration of child victims of trafficking.

**Thank you, Mr. President!**