



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF**

**BULGARIA**

**TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**World Autism Awareness Day**

**“Populations in Movement: Addressing the Opportunities and Challenges to Ensure Care and Services to Migrants with Autism and Developmental Disabilities”**

**New York, 31 March 2017, ECOSOC Chamber, UNHQ**

**H.E. Mr. Georgi Panayotov, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the UN,  
President of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with  
Disabilities**

**Madam Under-Secretary General Cristina Gallach,**

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First, I would like to extend special thanks to Bangladesh and Qatar for their strong commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities and for organizing this year again a high-level event for the commemoration of the *World Autism Awareness Day*. I am honoured to participate in the event in my capacity as President of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

On today’s important occasion when we mark the *World Autism Awareness Day* I would like to encourage all of us to use this opportunity to celebrate human diversity in all its richness and go the extra mile for persons with disabilities. Now is the time to highlight the talents of persons with disabilities and ensure that all persons, with or without disability, enjoy their human rights as enshrined in Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all subsequent international human rights treaties, especially the most recent one - the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - the CRPD. As President of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD I am committed to further advancing the human rights of persons with disabilities by promoting the full implementation of the Convention.

The CRPD is the first international human rights convention of the 21st century and in the 10 years since its adoption, the CRPD has also become one of the most quickly ratified of all the international human right treaties with 173 States Parties already, including one organization - the European Union.

The CRPD is unique in many ways and rightly so - it marked a true paradigm shift for persons with disabilities by changing the medical model of disability to a human rights-based approach where persons with disabilities are no longer viewed as recipients of charity, medical treatment or social protection but as subjects entitled to the same set of human rights as everybody else and are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent. The CRPD recognizes the role of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in decision-making processes that impact their lives.

The human rights-based approach of the CRPD acknowledges that disability is a social construct and persons with disabilities face barriers as a result of the social structure of our societies that limit their ability to enjoy their human rights on an equal basis with others. To overcome those barriers an inclusive approach is required that involves persons with disabilities as partners in the planning, development, implementation and monitoring of all relevant policies and programmes.

Persons with autism and other psychosocial, developmental and intellectual disabilities face even bigger barriers and are often the most marginalized in society. Migration further exacerbates the challenges persons with autism and with other disabilities encounter. It is our responsibility to raise awareness about autism and effectively fight stigma and discrimination while at the same time create opportunities for persons with autism to realize their potential by ensuring equal access to inclusive education and mainstream employment. Efforts should be aimed at removing societal barriers and misconceptions about autism by promoting the independence and respecting the dignity of persons with autism; individuals and families should be provided with the necessary skills and support to have the choice and control over their own lives. If we are to achieve inclusive and accessible societies and the realization of the human rights of all we need to promote a rights-based approach focused on supported rather than substituted decision-making by ensuring that persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, participate and are included in decision-making processes that impact their lives.

Bulgaria is strongly committed to the implementation of the CRPD and will continue to actively promote the full realization of the human rights of persons with disabilities at all levels and their effective and meaningful participation in society on an equal basis with others.

At global level the implementation of the CRPD is further strengthened by the ambitious and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which for the first time has included and recognized persons with disabilities as agents in global action. The implementation of the SDGs from the perspective of the human rights of persons with disabilities in line with the CRPD is instrumental for delivering on the promise of the Agenda to leave no one behind.

**Thank you!**