



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

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**2017 International Day of Persons with Disabilities - 3 December**

*Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies for all*

**Panel discussion on “Building Future Societies for All”**

**New York, 1 December 2017, CR 4, UNHQ, pm session**

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

**Opening remarks**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished guests,**

This year’s commemoration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities gives us a unique opportunity to explore the link between sustainable tourism and inclusive urban development through a human rights perspective with the aim to forge fruitful partnerships between the public and private sectors and mobilize the different stakeholders to work together for ensuring the social inclusion and equal participation of persons with disabilities.

Tourism is one of the world’s largest economic sectors that creates jobs and boosts exports thus bringing tremendous economic benefits which, if wisely utilized, could drive a positive social change, preserve cultural heritage and save the environment.

The tourism industry is an important source of economic growth for Bulgaria too with a total contribution to GDP of 12.8% and of 11.9% to employment in 2016.

Travel and tourism are closely linked to urban development and social inclusion. The diverse challenges many cities in the world are facing today ranging from ageing, climate change and rising socio-economic inequalities can only be tackled through a people-centered and integrated approach with a focus on social inclusion in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda - Habitat III.

The commitment of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind is an important human rights imperative deeply rooted in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The ambitious 2030 Agenda has for the first time included and recognized persons with disabilities as agents of development which further strengthens the implementation of the CRPD. In view of that as President of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD I would like to underline that the implementation of the SDGs from the perspective of the human rights of persons with disabilities in line with the CRPD is instrumental for achieving sustainable development whereby no one is left behind. In view of that it is important to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are incorporated in the thematic discussions connected to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the review processes under the ECOSOC High-level Political Forum and all other UN processes. It is necessary also to explore ways for further strengthening the cooperation and partnership among States Parties, United Nations entities, civil society and persons with disabilities to advance the implementation of the Convention with a view to achieving inclusive development.

The concept of sustainable development which incorporates the model of inclusive urban development is closely related to the human rights agenda as it operationalizes the inherent link between the integration of the economic, environmental and social aspects and the human rights imperative with a view to ensure a people-centered approach to development as envisaged in the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda.

Integrated urban development can only be achieved if it takes into consideration the human rights of the most vulnerable and marginalized in our societies and includes persons with disabilities in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies at all levels while at the same time ensuring smart economic growth, adaptivity to changes and equal treatment.

Bulgaria is strongly committed to the implementation of the Convention and is actively promoting the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society on an equal basis with others. Bulgarian legislation provides guarantees of non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all. All policies and programmes on disability follow a human rights based approach and are designed together with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. The National Strategy for the implementation of the CRPD for 2016 – 2020 outlines the specific role and responsibilities of the different Government institutions, including with regard to inclusive urban development and sustainable tourism.

The Government of Bulgaria implements a number of programmes aimed at improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities and ensuring their inclusion in society which are closely linked to the model of integrated urban development successfully realized in Bulgaria.

I would like to end my presentation with an example of a good practice from Bulgaria which highlights social services in the community as a successful form of social inclusion of persons with disabilities with a special focus on children:

As part of the ongoing child-care reform and the process of deinstitutionalization of children all specialized institutions for children with disabilities in Bulgaria were closed in 2016 and all children with intellectual and physical disabilities were moved to modern, specially

adapted accommodation with tailored support services in the community as part of the “Childhood for All” project. A network of integrated services in the community was established in Bulgaria which introduced an innovative cross-sectoral model for providing support to children and their families with a special focus on children with disabilities. This ambitious plan was successfully realized with the financial and political support of the EU. Each child / young person is now able to access community-based support services according to their individual needs and has the opportunity to live with family or in a family-like environment. Children/young persons leaving the institutions have equal access to services and are cared for in the community, thus encouraging their successful inclusion in society.

**Thank you!**