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

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**UNICEF Executive Board**

**Second Regular Session, New York, 8 – 10 September 2015 (CR 1 CB)**

**H.E. Mr. Stephan Tafrov, Ambassador,**

**Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the UN**

**General Statements**

***New York, Tuesday, 8 September 2015***

**Madam President,**

I would like to thank the Executive Director Mr. Anthony Lake for his inspiring presentation and to commend him for his able leadership and relentless efforts in protecting children and advancing the children’s agenda all over the world. UNICEF’s dedicated work and strong commitment to children is instrumental for the improvement of children’s quality of life and for expanding the opportunities for children to reach their full potential.

**Madam President,**

This year is of crucial importance for the efforts of the international community to pave the way for building a better world in the next fifteen years for all people and especially for children. The new post-2015 development agenda will be adopted by the world leaders only in two weeks’ time and as the Executive Director emphasized earlier it is our responsibility to make it truly sustainable and to ensure it meets its main objective – create and sustain a better world for the children.

During the intergovernmental negotiations Bulgaria has been advocating strongly in its national capacity and in the EU, including as a co-chair of the Group of Friends of Children and SDGs, for integrating children’s human rights in all aspects of development with the aim to put children at the heart of the post-2015 development agenda. Bulgaria believes that the new agenda will be truly transformative as it was designed for the people envisaging children and youth as the real agents of change. The new Goals can serve as a useful platform for channeling children’s potential for the creation of a better world.

**Madam President,**

Over the last almost 70 years UNICEF has made significant contribution for the improvement of children’s lives in all parts of the world. Thanks to the tireless work and dedication of UNICEF management and staff significant progress has been achieved with regard to child safety and protection, nutrition, healthcare, education etc., as well as for the promotion of the rights and well-being of every child, including the most disadvantaged children.

Unfortunately, in the last couple of years we have been witnessing a scary tendency of growing risk of conflicts and natural disasters in different parts of the world. As the Executive Director has pointed out in his presentation the world today confronts the largest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War which affects children adversely. In this context, I would like to reiterate Bulgaria’s full support for the on-going integration of UNICEF’s emergency response with the development dimension considering the important role of humanitarian action in advancing the long-term development goals.

**Madam President,**

The biggest mass migration in modern times that we are experiencing today is of an unprecedented scale and nature that requires immediate action through a coherent and comprehensive international response. I would like to emphasize children’s particular vulnerability in this situation. We are appalled at the shocking images of children forced into migration in the quest for better life that we see in the media every day. It is our moral duty and responsibility as humans to relieve the plight of children by all means urgently.

Being a transit and a host country of thousands of migrants and refugees Bulgaria is making every effort, in cooperation with the EU, UNICEF and other partners, to ensure good living conditions for all those fleeing from the scourge of war and seeking refuge by paying particular attention to the specific needs of migrant children, especially unaccompanied children seeking help, through the provision of essential services such as food, healthcare, education and support for family reunion.

**Madam President,**

The protection of children is a main priority for Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Government undertakes sustained and coordinated measures for promoting the rights and well-being of all children, especially of those belonging to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, including children with disabilities. Special attention is paid to the social inclusion of children and the protection of the right of every child to grow up in a family environment through a number of targeted policies aimed at encouraging good parenting and supporting families with children, promoting innovative integrated services for early childhood development and ensuring better access to child care centers, quality education and advanced healthcare services for small children. Significant progress has been achieved in the process of deinstitutionalization of children, including through the implementation of special measures for the prevention of child abandonment and the provision of foster care and social services in the community by taking into consideration the specific needs of all vulnerable groups of children and their families.

The strong partnership and cooperation that has been established between the Bulgarian Government and UNICEF is instrumental for achieving durable results for children in my country. As a valuable partner in all major national initiatives concerning children, UNICEF contributes significantly to the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of all child-focused policies and programmes. Furthermore, UNICEF has played a crucial role for establishing fruitful partnerships with the civil society, the private sector and media to advocate for child protection and achieve better results for children.

**Madam President,**

During this session the Executive Board will approve the CPDs of nine countries in our region and I avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate Bulgaria’s full support to the impressive work of the Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States and to salute especially its Director – Madame Marie-Pierre Poirier – for her exemplary leadership and strong commitment to promoting the rights of children.

UNICEF is an important partner for the countries in our region. The Regional Office supports the on-going reforms undertaken by the different governments and provides valuable expertise, knowledge and good practices that help governments successfully implement their national strategies for children. The excellent partnership that has been established between UNICEF and the governments of the countries in the region is crucial for ensuring sustainability of results for children in the long run.

**Madam President,**

To conclude, I would like to reiterate Bulgaria’s full support to the work of UNICEF and our high appreciation to UNICEF’s management and staff for their firm commitment and dedication to protecting children and upholding children’s rights everywhere in the world.

Bulgaria highly values the strong partnership with UNICEF and is fully committed to further developing, strengthening and expanding this fruitful cooperation in the best interest of children and with the aim to further protect children and promote their rights at national, regional and global level.

**Thank you, Madam President.**