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Item 3 (a) Priority theme.**

Statement of Bulgarian Youth Delegates - Mr. Dimitar Dimitrov and Ms. Anina Yovkova

Mr. Chair,

“One cannot hear one’s inner voice - one can only feel it!” “One cannot hear the skills of other people - one can only shape and improve them!” “One cannot hear change and social development - one can make them happen!” These are the thoughts that young volunteers with hearing impairment from the Bulgarian NGO “Listen Up” shared with a youth online magazine which asked them what remains unheard in our society. Governments should indeed listen up to this message, for it is relevant to the entire international community and the various stakeholders - from high-level officials, to the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the global civil society. It is only through the joint efforts and coordinated action of all these relevant actors that social development could be made truly sustainable.

As Bulgarian youth representatives to the UN, our main priority is the promotion of human rights for all and the active participation of youth in decision-making processes at all levels. In more specific terms, our work is also focused on the social inclusion and equal access to quality education for young persons with disabilities to enable their empowerment and professional realisation. The beginning of our term as Bulgarian Youth Delegates coincided with the historical adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, we committed ourselves to raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda among young Bulgarians and to actively engaging them into the implementation of the Goals.

Together with the distinguished Youth Delegates of Romania and the AIESEC offices in our respective countries, we have launched a project called “17 Steps” which aims to engage Bulgarian and Romanian high school students with various activities related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We are convinced that the effective implementation of the SDGs would happen only if young people are at the heart of the process. In this regard, we urge all Member States to establish the UN Youth Delegate

Programme and allow young people to make their voices heard on all issues and at all levels.

Mr. Chair,

In the last report on *Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world*, the Secretary-General has highlighted the crucial importance of elaborating adequate social policies for development that is transformative and based on human rights. In order to address the problems affecting the lives of individuals in vulnerable or marginalized situations, they should be enabled to actively participate in all stages of the process, thus ensuring that no one is left behind.

Mr. Chair,

The volunteers with hearing impairment whose thoughts were presented at the beginning of our statement show us a perfect example of how young persons with disabilities seek to create and explore the opportunities for their self-empowerment and equal access to quality education and career development. As Bulgarian Youth Delegates to the United Nations, we believe that all Member States should not only aim to guarantee adequate social services for disadvantaged persons, but also encourage them to pursue greater independence, personal fulfilment and professional realization. In this way, they would be able to mobilize their full potential and enthusiasm as equally important actors for the achievement of inclusive and sustainable social development based on human rights for all.

Mr. Chair,

Social development in the contemporary world would be unthinkable without the meaningful participation of all relevant actors. To ensure that the process is sustainable and truly successful, all governments should promote the active engagement of young people at different levels, and consider them as equal partners on global scale in decision-making processes.

As Bulgarian Youth Delegates to the UN, we encourage Member States to provide accessible and inclusive quality education for all by promoting the culture of peace, dialogue and mutual understanding. This would enable all young people - especially the most vulnerable ones, including young persons with disabilities - to contribute to advancing social development and creating positive change.

Schools and Universities curricula should be adapted to the current trends in the social, political and economic life in order to provide young people with the necessary skills to be successful in their respective field, to communicate effectively in a multicultural environment, to exchange ideas and good practices with their peers from all over the world, and to be able to realise their full potential. It is also essential to introduce civic and human rights education, as well as interactive teaching techniques from non-formal education. Teachers should stimulate the proactive role and critical thinking of their students, thus enabling them to come up with innovative ideas and find creative solutions to various problems.

Mr. Chair,

Young people possess the potential and the will to actively contribute to the promotion of social development at all levels by upholding human rights and speaking up for the interests of all individuals. To achieve that, youth organizations should be provided with the necessary support and funding to manage a wide range of projects and initiatives for social development. We urge Member States to cooperate more actively with youth, youth-focused and youth-led organizations and to implement their vision and ideas into new policies. Governments should also promote youth participation in decision-making processes at local, national and international level, thus fostering a generation of proactive and socially responsible citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Chair!