



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC
OF
B U L G A R I A
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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UNAOC Focal Points Meeting

New York, 15 January 2016, ECOSOC Chamber, UNHQs

Ms. Asya Tsvetanova, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Bulgaria to the UN

Mr. High Representative,

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

Bulgaria welcomes the initiative to convene the meeting of the Focal Points today which provides a good opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss ways of further strengthening the role of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in promoting peace and dialogue.

Bulgaria supports the objectives and the work of the UNAOC aimed at preventing violence, promoting diversity and building peaceful and inclusive societies.

The four pillars of the UNAOC focused on youth, education, media and migration address some of the most pressing and complex challenges the international community faces at present which makes the mission and mandate of the UNAOC so much relevant today.

Bulgaria is convinced of the added value of the activities of the UNAOC related to the promotion of dialogue, tolerance and social inclusion as important prerequisites for building peaceful and prosperous societies.

Bulgaria wishes to highlight the relevance of the UNAOC mission with regard to the implementation of the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development considering the special focus on human rights, inclusion and the rule of law contained in the new Agenda.

Regarding the main topic of today's discussion Bulgaria fully shares the notion that building trust is of key importance for any activity aimed at preventing violent extremism and radicalization and welcomes the work of the UNAOC in this direction. The UNAOC serves as an important platform for promoting the spirit of dialogue, tolerance and understanding within the society and among nations which constitutes a valuable contribution to the efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism.

Bulgaria welcomes the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism of the Secretary General and its comprehensive nature and encourages the UNAOC to explore ways of contributing to its implementation.

Bulgaria strongly believes that building societies based on respect for human rights and the rule of law creates the favourable conditions for preventing violent extremism and eliminating its root causes. Education and social and political inclusion as well as promoting intercultural dialogue, tolerance and understanding are among the main tools for preventing violent extremism and the UNAOC can play a key role in this direction. The UNAOC's campaign against hate speech in the media launched last December is an important initiative in this context which should be further developed.

Bulgaria is encouraged by the special attention the UNAOC attaches to preventing and eliminating the marginalization and radicalization of young people. Youth is particularly vulnerable to extremist ideologies and propaganda and we are deeply concerned by the increasing number of young people being recruited or radicalised by extremist groups. The need to address the root causes of social exclusion and marginalization should be highlighted too.

The main theme of the 7th Annual Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations to be held in April this year namely "Living Together in Inclusive Societies: A Challenge and a Goal" fully reflects the ambition of the Group of Friends of the UNAOC to explore further ways of promoting human rights, social inclusion and good governance. Bulgaria expresses its appreciation to Azerbaijan for hosting the Annual Forum this year and is willing to actively participate in the deliberations. We attach great importance also to the two subthemes of the Forum "Preventing Violent Extremism" and "Best Practices in Social Inclusion". Through its ambitious agenda the Forum will enable Member States to share their valuable experience and views on the subject thus moving the discussion forward and outlining the steps for action. As a country with a long history of tolerance and respect for diversity where people from different cultures, religions and ethnicities have been living peacefully together for centuries Bulgaria has a lot to share and contribute to promoting mutual understanding and dialogue.

Thank you, Mr. High Representative!