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| image1.png | **PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF**  **BULGARIA**  **TO THE UNITED NATIONS** |

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**World Youth Skills Day 2017**

**“Skills for the Future of Work”**

**New York, 17 July 2017, 3.00 pm - 6.00 pm, CR 3, UNHQs**

**Ms. Asya Tsvetanova, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Bulgaria to the United Nations**

**Honourable Ministers,**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

In December 2014 the General Assembly designated 15 July as the World Youth Skills Day recognizing that fostering the acquisition of skills by youth is crucial for empowering them to successfully enter the changing labour markets. Bulgaria congratulates Sri Lanka and Portugal, as well as UNESCO, ILO and the Office of the SG’s Envoy on Youth for organizing today’s commemoration of the day and for their continuous efforts aimed at promoting youth education and employment.

Young people between the age of 10 and 24 form a quarter of the world’s population thus representing a major human resource for the prosperity of their societies and the global community in general.

Bulgaria believes that children and youth can be the key agents of positive social change and actively promotes their human rights and their meaningful participation in decision-making both at national level and globally.

Bulgaria attaches high importance to youth empowerment through education and employment and views it as crucial for achieving sustainable development and peaceful and inclusive societies as envisaged in the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the last couple of years the youth unemployment rate in Bulgaria has been steadily decreasing and more young women and men are in education which is encouraging to see but the difficulties as regards labour market transition persist.

The Bulgarian Government takes special measures for reducing the proportion of young people not in employment or training by ensuring the right to quality education for all and providing youth with skills that match labour market demands.

Bulgaria believes that greater recognition and investment in non-formal education could be a viable solution to the challenges facing youth currently considering the potential of non-formal education to serve as a bridge between the labor market and the formal education system. It is important also that all forms of education should focus on the development of soft skills, including entrepreneurial, communication and leadership skills, teamwork and collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking etc.

Social entrepreneurship is another useful tool to address those challenges in a sustainable way by empowering young people to create job opportunities themselves. Non-formal education and social entrepreneurship are crucial also for the inclusion of young persons with disabilities in the labour market which in the long run could contribute to reducing the rate of youth unemployment in general. Inclusive education has also been recognized as a main national priority in the field of education with the adoption of the new Pre-School and School Act of Bulgaria – in force since 2016.

**Mr. Moderator,**

Women and girls face greater challenges with regard to employment only due to their gender. Progress has been made globally to close the gender gaps in education and labour market participation, but gender differences within education and employment persist in many parts of the world. Efforts to ensure women’s and girls’ participation in education and employment should form part of a wider strategy for gender equality that provides for equal access to quality education, equal employment opportunities, equal pay for equal work, eliminating segregation in education and professional development, ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls, etc.

In the last twenty years Bulgaria has achieved great progress with regard to women empowerment through education, including the participation of women in science. Currently women represent almost half of all scientists in Bulgaria – 49%. The proportion of female BA, MA and PhD students in Bulgaria is steadily increasing and at present stands at 43%. 53% of all doctorate degrees in Bulgaria are awarded to women. With these indicators Bulgaria is among the leading countries in the EU.

**Mr. Moderator,**

Bulgaria continues to strongly advocate for a more substantial involvement of young women and men in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and for ensuring youth participation in decision-making at global level, including through the UN Youth Delegate Programme. Since 2007 youth delegates have been included in Bulgaria’s official delegations to the Third Committee of the General Assembly and to the Commission for Social Development of the Economic and Social Council, and their voices have been heard and taken into consideration.

**Thank you!**

**Question:**

Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Nicole Kiprilov. I am the intern for the Permanent Mission of Bulgaria to the UN. I am also a student and I have a question that pertains to, in particular, college graduates and unemployment.

The Economic Policy Institute recently conducted a study that showed that young college graduates, even at prestigious private universities, face elevated unemployment rates and stagnant wages. Around 66% of people aged 24-29 in developed countries do not have a college degree and it is evident that this lack of education would make it much harder to be employed. However, the key point of this study is that discrimination against young people based on their ethnicity, race, gender, etc. who are trying to enter the work force is high, even among young people with college degrees.

As we have heard, the rates of youth unemployment in the developing world are absolutely devastating, but even in developed countries, universities do not do enough to prepare young people for a life in the work force. Now whether you have additional work training programs implemented at universities or whether there are proposals for changes in curricula that would take a more holistic approach towards education, as the Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth very eloquently stated, there must be more outreach at the university level, which Ms. Park talked about in-depth.

My question is, how do you practically, not just theoretically, work with or around the autonomy of professors and the autonomy of campus entities and organizations, something which can potentially present itself as an obstacle, in order to reach out to universities and implement either programs or curricula that will attempt to rectify this very significant problem of youth unemployment?

Thank you!