



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

11 East 84th Street, New York, NY 10028, Tel: (212) 737 4790, Fax: (212) 472 9865, e-mail: bulgaria@un.int

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**Commission on the Status of Women - General Debate
Sixty-Second Session, New York, 11 – 22 March 2018**

Agenda Item 3 Priority Theme: Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

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

New York, 15 March 2019

Madam Chair,

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the EU. Allow me now to share some views in my national capacity.

As we are all aware that women make half – or a bit more – of the world population. Therefore, women's empowerment is the fundamental precondition for sustainable development and a key driver for prosperity. In Bulgaria, we have recognized this reality through our legislation, starting from the Constitution, where the principles of equality and non-discrimination are enshrined, and passing to other law where the issue is addressed horizontally. The most recent changes being the Penal Code Amendments on Domestic Violence, which built upon previous provisions and criminalize Domestic Violence if preceded by systematic acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence, forcible limitation of freedom or violation of rights. This definition applies to all cases in which the offence is committed against a spouse or partner, including former ones. The penalties for these type of crimes were also significantly increased.

For this year's theme, a number laws and mechanism might be considered relevant. First the Law on Protection against Discrimination, which regulates protection against all forms of discrimination and prevention of discrimination. Its aim is to ensure that everyone has the right to equality before the law, equal treatment and opportunities for participation in public life, and effective protection against discrimination. The Law prohibits any direct or indirect discrimination based on gender, race, ethnic or social origin and is applicable including for access to public services and sustainable infrastructure.

Another key legal framework is the Law on Gender Equality. With the adoption of the Law, the position of gender equality coordinators was introduced. These coordinators participate in the development and performance of comprehensive gender equality national policy. 28 gender

equality coordinators (and 12 deputies) were assigned at regional level, which are officers of all regional administrations in the Republic of Bulgaria. They are relevant for insuring access to all public services at regional level, as well as sustainable infrastructure and social protection.

Another important element of Bulgaria's framework is the adopted in 2016 updated National Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality with a timeframe until to 2020. Its main objective is to create guarantees for equal treatment, equal access to the resources of society and equal participation of women and men in the decision-making process. In this regard, allow me mention that we have a Chairwoman presiding the National Assembly and two women serving as Deputy Prime Ministers. Moreover, the Vice-President, our Ombudsperson and the Mayor of Sofia are all women, as are six other ministers and all the Bulgarian EU Commissioners we have had.

It is also relevant to mention the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, which was established as an independent body that observes and decides on violations of the above-mentioned laws and sets out measures to prevent and end violations. This Commission is often considered as one of the most relevant bodies to address the issue of gender equality and equality in general.

In the beginning of this month, the acting President of the World Bank presented a report on behalf of her institution and pointed out that the world is losing \$ 163 trillion a year because of women who are not fully involved in the public and working life. Ms. Georgieva called this "the most expensive solvable problem in the world". One could question the methodology behind the numbers but one thing is unquestionable - women's underrepresentation in society and especially in the economy is not only a human rights issue but also an economic liability. Data shows that in Bulgaria we have 49% of managing positions held by women, ranking second in the EU. Moreover, half of all our scientists are women and 27% of engineers, which is the highest score in both categories within the EU.

The Government of Bulgaria pays special attention to the development of measures for the equal participation for women and men in the labour market, reconciliation of work and family life, equal pay for equal work. Appropriate measures to improve female employment are being implemented, as well as measures to develop opportunities for flexible employment. We promote the role of fathers in sharing family responsibilities, including through legal incentives to take parental leave. We also expand the system of accessible and quality social services, including childcare and services for dependent family members.

The Bulgarian Government has also established a sustainable model for cooperation with civil society and social partners in all processes related to gender equality. They participate in the National Council on Gender Equality to the Council of Ministers chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. Women's organisations in Bulgaria participate as accountability agents in budgetary, legislative and policy making processes at all levels, thus contributing to the elaboration of relevant legislation and policies. In this regard, I would like to underline that Ms. Genoveva Tisheva, a newly elected member of CEDAW last year, enjoyed the full support of our Government as a prominent representative of the civil society.

Thank you, Madam Chair!