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

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**69th UNGA, Third Committee**

**Item 26 (b)**

***Statement of Bulgarian Youth Delegates***

Madam Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

Fellow Youth Delegates,

It is a great honor for us to speak on behalf of the young people in Bulgaria. Youth is the epitome of innovation and enthusiasm. Not only do we, as young people, have the vision to imagine a better future, but we also have the energy and resilience needed to follow through. Unfortunately, our endeavor is often hampered by the numerous challenges we stumble upon, such as youth unemployment and access to quality education. These issues are surely complex but by no means without a solution.

Firstly, as youth delegates, we are advocating for the active participation of young people in the decision-making process on pertinent social issues. Secondly, we would like to stress the importance of non-formal education as a key tool for the integration of young people with disabilities, as well as a way to reduce the rate of youth unemployment. Lastly, we are also looking forward to the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, hoping that it will include ambitious, yet achievable goals, and clear quantifiable milestones to measure its successful implementation.

Madam Chair,

Upon our appointment as youth delegates to the UN, we conducted a survey among young people in Bulgaria to gauge opinions about the most pressing youth issues. 80% of the surveyed identified youth unemployment as their greatest concern. The figure comes as no surprise, given that 28% of young Bulgarians are unemployed.

Today, young people spend years of studying towards a university degree, often working in the meantime or incurring significant financial debt, only to find themselves jobless upon graduation. Oftentimes, unemployed graduates become disillusioned and lose momentum. How can we then hope that the young scientist will have the vision and willpower to invent a new source of renewable energy or find a cure for cancer?

Youth unemployment is usually perceived as a domestic issue because to a great extent it depends on local economy and demographics. However, it is closely related to poverty eradication, age discrimination, gender equality and youth empowerment, all of which are being addressed at a **global** level as well. We call upon all governments to join efforts and share good practices in order to significantly decrease the rate of youth unemployment worldwide.

Further, we urge governments to encourage young people in their countries to seek internships and other means of gaining professional experience prior to graduation. More importantly, we request all governments to take an active role in **creating** such opportunities. It is commendable that some have already made both political and financial commitment to fight youth unemployment. Going forward, we hope to see even more improvement.

Madam Chair,

Talking about unemployment as one of the main youth challenges, it is important to mention that education should not always be taken for granted. Growing up, finding a proper job and pursuing a career become much more difficult for a young person with mental or physical disability who is not provided with equal access to schools and universities. Undoubtedly, a lot has already been done concerning integration of children with special educational needs. Bulgaria is strongly committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and follows a human rights based approach in all its policies and programmes. We believe that there is much more to be done for the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We would like to note that investment in education and extracurricular activities could be the answer to combating inequality. Greater recognition of non-formal training will increase its potential as a bridge between the labor market and the formal educational system, which definitely remains a core factor in the development of any individual. Moreover, non-formal education will help young people recognize their role and position in a global society and make decisions for themselves as independent and dynamic individuals, and responsible citizens. Better social inclusion can be achieved if both national and international policies are aimed at the elimination of the root causes of this phenomenon. As discussions on the post-2015 agenda progress, we would like to emphasize the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies for sustainable development.

It should also be admitted that young people are an important resource and have proven to be key partners in the development of strategic policies. Therefore investing in capacity-building is one of the best decisions for the future of the young generation. The Millennium Development Goals laid the foundation but now we need to build on what has already been achieved by pushing the limit even further. At this historical moment, we have the chance to reshape the world by designing together the post-2015 development agenda. We call for an inclusive agenda based on human rights. More emphasis should be put on implementing the formulated goals and ensuring that set targets are met. Change is a process and we may not see the results immediately. But we must give young people the means to bring change.

Madam Chair,

We, as Bulgarian Youth Delegates, strongly believe that ***there can be no peace, no prosperity and no progress without the full and equal participation of young people in decision-making processes all over the world!***

Thank you, Madam Chair!