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

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**Eight Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the**

**Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

**New York, 9 – 11 June 2015**

**H.E. Mr. Stephan Tafrov, Ambassador**

**Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the UN**

**General Debate**

***New York, Tuesday, 9 June 2015***

**Mr. Chair,**

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

The protection of the rights of persons with disabilities is an important priority of the Government of Bulgaria. All policies and programmes on disability follow a human rights based approach.

Bulgaria is strongly committed to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and is actively promoting the full and effective participation of disabled people in society on an equal basis with others.

A National Strategy for the period 2008 – 2015 for ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities has been developed by the Bulgarian Government and implemented by the different institutions through the elaboration of specific Plans of Action. The Strategy integrates the main principles of the CRPD and other human rights treaties, as well as the relevant recommendations of the Council of Europe and the best practices of the European Union.

Measures have been taken for the full alignment of the relevant national legislation with the provisions of the CRPD. A number of legislative changes have already been introduced with regard to the implementation of different articles of the Convention, including protection of persons with disabilities in disasters and humanitarian crises; equality before the law; liberty and security of the person; liberty of movement and nationality; independent living and inclusion in the community; the right to education and employment, etc. Progress has been made also for the full implementation of Articles 21, 30 and 9 regarding freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information; participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport; and accessibility.

Special attention is paid to raising awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and their role in the society.

The first Implementation Report of Bulgaria was submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in July 2014.

**Mr. Chair,**

A new National Plan of Action for the implementation of the CRPD for the period 2015 – 2020 has been developed by the Government of Bulgaria in close collaboration with the civil society, disabled persons organizations and other social partners. The Plan outlines the specific role and responsibilities of the different Government institutions and other stakeholders, and includes 8 strategic goals for the implementation of the Convention, namely: designating focal points for the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the CRPD, adopting a long-term National Strategy for the implementation of the Convention, establishing an expert-level Working Group to monitor the implementation of the Plan of Action, launching raising awareness campaigns, finalising the harmonisation of legislation with the CRPD, introducing new changes in the legislative framework as needed, speeding up the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, and defending the First Implementation Report.

In 2011 the Government of Bulgaria adopted a National Strategy for the period 2011 – 2020 aimed at promoting employment of persons with disabilities.

The National Development Programme “Bulgaria 2020” and the National Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion 2020 also include specific measures for creating employment and upgrading the qualification of the most vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities.

**Mr. Chair,**

Bulgaria undertakes sustained and coordinated measures for creating opportunities and improving the well-being of persons with disabilities with a special focus on children and youth with disabilities.

With the post-2015 negotiations entering their final and crucial stage Bulgaria continues to advocate actively for integrating the human rights of persons with disabilities in the different aspects of the new development agenda and for ensuring the participation of disabled people in all processes that affect their lives.

**Thank you, Mr. Chair!**