

2021 ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS)

(23 - 25 June 2021, Geneva)

STATEMENT BY BULGARIA

on the theme “Strengthening humanitarian assistance to face the challenges of 2021 and beyond: mobilizing respect for international humanitarian law, inclusion, gender, innovation and partnerships”

Madame President,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and its Member States and would like to further highlight the following points in its national capacity.

Bulgaria attaches particular importance to the Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as a unique forum for discussing pivotal issues on the humanitarian agenda requiring an urgent and coordinated international response.

This year’s theme *“Strengthening humanitarian assistance to face the challenges of 2021 and beyond: mobilizing respect for international humanitarian law, inclusion, gender, innovation and partnerships”* spells out in a very eloquent manner the continued endeavour of the international community to delivering effective and efficient humanitarian assistance under very complex and demanding international conditions, especially during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bulgaria reaffirms its support to the UN’s central coordinating role in emergencies, encourages strong cooperation with all other humanitarian actors and therefore supports the ECOSOC humanitarian resolution as a collective commitment to strengthen the response to the COVID-19 crisis in the spirit of effective multilateralism.

In this regard, we highly appreciate the successful efforts of Switzerland and Indonesia in reaching consensus among member-states on that Resolution.

Bulgaria is strongly committed to **promoting respect for International Humanitarian Law** as one of the strongest tools the international community has for ensuring respect for human rights and for advancing the principles of International Law.

Bulgaria is deeply concerned about and strongly condemns the growing number of attacks on medical and humanitarian personnel. We call for a greater effort and support in identifying gaps, making connections and creating synergies among the initiatives aimed at enhancing the protection of medical personnel and humanitarian workers.

Bulgaria as numerous other countries attaches great importance to **the humanitarian -development-peace nexus** and to its operationalization. The application of this approach, particularly in providing assistance to many fragile and conflict-prone countries provides the instruments and mechanisms needed to address both the short-term and the long-term needs in conflict-prone countries and contributes to building lasting peace.

Bulgaria continues its efforts to promote **inclusive and effective humanitarian response** in emergency situations and puts special emphasis on the needs assessment and analysis of most vulnerable - in particular women, children and persons with disabilities, who are affected most gravely by armed conflicts and protracted humanitarian situations.

Women are among the first responders and play a central role in the survival and resilience of crisis-affected communities: therefore their inputs into identifying humanitarian needs and potential solutions are crucial in formulating an adequate response.

Taking into account **how disproportionately humanitarian crises affect women and girls** and to what extent these crises exacerbate pre-existing inequalities and aggravate their exposure to different forms of violence, especially sexual and gender-based one, Bulgaria tailors its humanitarian response to enhance the local capacity building on resilience, on eliminating gender stereotypes and on full and effective participation of women and girls, men and boys in all spheres of life.

In many humanitarian emergencies, persons with disabilities are also excessively affected and face additional barriers in accessing protection and humanitarian assistance, including relief and recovery support. They are frequently exposed to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination as well as targeted violence, exploitation and abuse.

Bulgaria continues to advocate strongly for **further inclusion of refugees with disabilities and recognition of their capacities to participate in the different phases of humanitarian action**. In this regard and in light of the broader efforts to leave no one behind, a clear focus on the need for increased integration of the persons with disabilities in the humanitarian response should be maintained. As expression of the high priority of this issue we have introduced national procedures for providing financial support for the better inclusion of refugees with disabilities in the humanitarian response.

COVID-19 has shown that in times of pandemic of such magnitude it is **critical to strengthen the national and international public health emergency response capacity**, to develop inclusive national vaccination programs covering persons of concern to the UNHCR and to ensure safe, rapid and unimpeded access to vaccines of humanitarian and medical personnel responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and to facilitate and enable transportation and logistical supply line.

We note with concern that the **magnitude and complexity of humanitarian situations have increased** disproportionally in the last decades. Conflict situations and natural, including climate-related disasters have been further exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic and have caused hugely negative economic and development disruptions.

Bulgaria supports the call for **greater solidarity with people in need and with States and parties in complex humanitarian emergencies**, in particular in armed conflict and in post-conflict situations, for improved quality and effectiveness of humanitarian action and for enhanced complementarity with and between relevant stakeholders involved in response efforts.

Furthermore, utilizing innovative approaches, digitalization and technology innovations is charting new ways and means to cope with humanitarian emergencies. In this regard, we believe that the UN and its system of specialized organizations and agencies should remain at the center of the common endeavor of Member States.

In conclusion, we would like to underline that **Bulgaria's humanitarian action** will continue to be led by the universal humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality. In this regard, we plan to maintain our assistance to the most vulnerable groups such as refugees, women, children and people with disabilities as main humanitarian priority.