



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA



STATEMENT
BY H.E. MR. RUMEN RADEV
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
76TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**"BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH HOPE TO RECOVER FROM COVID-19, REBUILD SUSTAINABLY,
RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE PLANET, RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE, AND REVITALISE THE
UNITED NATIONS"**

MR. PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

MR. SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS,

EXCELLENCIES,

Allow me to start by expressing my gratitude to His Excellency Ambassador Volkan Bozkir, the President of the United Nations General Assembly during its 75th session, and my high appreciation for the way he conducted the work of the Assembly under the unprecedented conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would also like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly for the current 76th session, His Excellency Abdulla Shahid, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Maldives, who visited my country recently, and wish him every success in his future endeavor still challenged by the coronavirus.

I would like to begin by **quoting the late former UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan**: *“More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together. And that, my friends, is why we have the United Nations.”*

The raging COVID-19 pandemic in many parts of the world, and several, mostly unprecedented global challenges we are facing at the very same time, raised the need for all countries to support a more effective and coherent rules-based multilateral approach with the United Nations system at its core. **Multilateralism** is the key to our future and has no alternative. For Bulgaria, this is a high priority, and we support the deepening of EU’s strategic partnerships around the world, as well as its more active engagement with third countries and regional organizations.

The most urgent tasks ahead of us are:

- to prevent the spread of the coronavirus;
- to focus on the global economic recovery, decreasing growing economic disparities;
- to accelerate progress in climate change and sustainable development;
- to combat terrorism and trans border crime, as well as enhancing cybersecurity.

MR. PRESIDENT,

It is vital that we all stand in support and solidarity with the most vulnerable countries and people around the globe, under the guidance of the United Nations and the World Health Organization. My country, Bulgaria, has joined the efforts to provide vaccines to those in need by sharing its excess supplies through EU mechanisms and on a bilateral basis.

COVID-19 pandemic and climate change combined resulted in wasting an entire decade of progress in the implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals** in many parts of the world. There is no doubt that the sustainability cannot be achieved without dealing with the effects of **climate change**, environmental degradation, and loss of biodiversity.

To maximize our collective response, we must **build resilience**. We have to enhance the security of our supply chains, the critical infrastructure, the energy networks, as well as our preparedness for pandemics and natural disasters. Our efforts must be directed against the

increasingly frequent and severe malicious cyber-attacks exploiting vulnerabilities of our democratic societies.

MR. PRESIDENT,

Bulgaria is deeply concerned by the persisting threats to security and stability in numerous parts of the world. The situation in Afghanistan, the Middle East, the continuing crisis in Ukraine, are only some of them.

We share the grave concern over the deteriorating security situation in **Afghanistan** after the Taliban takeover, threatening to jeopardize the political, economic, and social achievements by that country over the past 20 years. The risk to the stability and security extends to the whole region and far beyond. Bulgaria condemned the **attacks near the International Airport in Kabul on 26 August 2021**. The attacks, claimed by Islamic State in Khorasan Province, resulted in the death and injuries of over 300 civilians, including women and children, and military personnel. **Terrorism** in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. All States must combat terrorism through concerted multilateral efforts, and by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law.

As an EU Member State Bulgaria supports EU's commitment to work with international partners on durable solutions for **Afghan refugees** and address the needs of countries hosting large numbers of them. As a sign of solidarity, we took a decision to receive up to 70 Afghan citizens who have worked for Bulgaria, EU or NATO missions, and their families.

Bulgaria shares the view that a **continued humanitarian engagement** in Afghanistan is essential to respond to the unfolding humanitarian crisis fueled by the conflict, the severe drought and COVID-19 pandemic.

Let me now turn to the **Middle East**. We condemn the missile attacks on Israel and the unproportioned use of force in retaliation while we fully recognize Israel's right to self-defense. We are deeply concerned by the violence in the **Occupied Palestinian Territory** since the deadly escalation between Israel and the militants in Gaza earlier this year, and the continued loss of life and serious injuries as reported to the Security Council by the UN Special Coordinator on the Middle East Peace Process.

The solution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine through the revival of the **Middle East Peace Process** has no alternative. We call on both sides to use maximum restraint, refrain from unilateral acts and provocations, and give a chance to negotiations and dialogue as well as to confidence-building measures.

Bulgaria has high appreciation for the work of the United Nations Agency on Palestinian Refugees on the ground, and will continue to support it both politically and financially.

In accordance with the fundamental principles of international law, Bulgaria continues to call for resolving the crisis in Ukraine on the basis of full and comprehensive implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

In the context of the ongoing pandemic, we need to ensure the respect for **human rights**, since they are of utmost importance for achieving security, prosperity and peace. Protection of children's rights is a key priority of my country with regard to human rights, with a strong emphasis on the inclusive education for children with disabilities and the process of deinstitutionalization. Further, we insist on the empowerment of women and girls, the promotion of rights of people with disabilities, as well as the fight against antisemitism, islamophobia and hate speech.

To promote these priorities on a global level, Bulgaria supports all relevant UN funds and programs, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and actively engages with the UN system, currently as member of the Human Rights Council.

We need a **revitalized United Nations** to effectively address the numerous challenges the world is facing today. To this end, Bulgaria will continue to work for efficient United Nations, adequately prepared to respond to the needs of humanity in the 21st century. We support the comprehensive reform in all areas of activity of the Organization.

Bulgaria welcomes the report of the Secretary-General "Our Common Agenda". We especially commend the fact that it is future-oriented with a strong focus on youth, since the decisions taken today will shape life of future generations.

Bulgaria is strongly committed to its financial obligations to the United Nations and is concerned about the persisting liquidity challenges, which undermine the ability of the Organization to implement its mandates and to carry out its work.

MR. PRESIDENT,

In concluding, let me be optimistic. At the very outset of the World Organization, Ralph Bunche, a renowned American political scientist and diplomat, a leading civil rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate for his mediation in Israel in the late 1940s, said: "*The United Nations is our one great hope for a peaceful and free world.*" I would like to add – the United Nations is our one great hope for safely steer the boat of our common destiny through the troubled and uncharted waters of our future, and we all must stand as one in its support.

THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT.