

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!**

**Global Compact on Refugees  
HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIALS MEETING  
14-15 December 2021, Geneva**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR YURI STERK  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA TO  
THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS  
IN GENEVA**

Distinguished Chairperson,  
Distinguished High Commissioner,  
Excellences,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to speak on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria.

I would like to welcome this first High Level Officials Meeting. It presents not only an opportunity to take stock of the progress made towards achieving the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) but also to identify where we need to direct our future efforts in view of the constantly increasing number of refugees and the pandemic that further aggravates the humanitarian context.

Priority should be given to the development, humanitarian assistance, good governance and security nexus. We believe our approach should be holistic, aimed as much as possible at the root causes and at providing durable solutions. Our joint efforts should support the countries of origin and their neighbours, assist the voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity and fight human trafficking, and migrant smuggling. Instrumental use of refugees for political purposes should be prevented and condemned.

We should never forget that the humanitarian and security crises and the pandemic disproportionately affect women, children and persons with disabilities. Their specific needs should be taken into account as much as possible.

Bulgaria sticks to this understanding in all aspects of its humanitarian response, in accordance with the pledges that we made. All refugees, including those with disabilities, have equal rights with the Bulgarian citizens regarding the access to medical and social

care. Bulgaria's National Vaccination Plan works in an inclusive manner with regard to the refugees and they can receive also a Covid-19 vaccination.

The current situation in Afghanistan requires urgent attention. Bulgaria actively supports all humanitarian efforts with regard to Afghanistan and its neighbours, and is providing assistance directly or through different international settings, the EU in the first place.

Stateless persons are among those of concern to UNHCR who need further engagement by individual states and the international community in general. In this context, allow me to present a brief overview of the progress achieved in fulfilling the pledges Bulgaria made at the High-Level Segment on Statelessness as part of the UNHCR Executive Committee meeting in October 2019, as well as during the First Global Refugee Forum in December 2019.

Bulgaria withdrew its Reservation with regard to art. 31 of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, by a law that entered into force on 25 September 2020. The UN Secretariat was notified on 26 October 2020.

Government institutions regularly assess the relevance of the other reservations.

Bulgaria has fulfilled also the pledge to include the stateless persons in its national census.

It should be noted that Bulgaria is one of the few countries in the world (less than 25) that have a legal framework on stateless persons' status. Since 2017, the Migration Directorate of our Ministry of Interior has issued 148 decisions granting stateless status. In this context, a pledge was made to improve the procedure for granting stateless status by introducing a quality assessment mechanism. This mechanism has been developed successfully in a joint effort of our Ministry of Interior and the UNHCR.

In fulfillment of the pledges made at the First Global Refugee Forum, Bulgaria granted financial support amounting to 50 000 EUR in 2020 and additional 75 000 EUR in 2021 for the implementation of the UNHCR's Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in Afghanistan. We foresee additional support for 2022 as well.

Bulgaria consistently adheres to the pledge, made together with France and Australia, to encourage the inclusion of refugees with disabilities in all kinds of humanitarian activity.

I would like to invite the UNHCR Secretariat to reflect the provided information in its upcoming report.

Finally, let me express appreciation for the excellent partnership between Bulgaria and the UNHCR, and reaffirm our strong support for the efforts of the UNHCR.

Thank you, Chair!