

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. DIMITER TZANTCHEV, DEPUTY MINISTER OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA,  
AT THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL EVENT AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL TO MARK  
THE 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1951 CONVENTION RELATING TO THE  
STATUS OF REFUGEES AND 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1961 CONVENTION  
ON THE REDUCTION OF STATELESSNESS**

7 December 2011, Geneva PM

Mr. Chairperson,  
High Commissioner,  
Excellences, distinguished delegates,

It is my privilege to address, on behalf of the Republic of Bulgaria, this highly important event, dedicated to the efforts of the international community to help and safeguard the rights of refugees and stateless people.

We commend the leadership of the High Commissioner and the efforts of all UNHCR staff in strengthening the international protection regime and creating opportunities for the most vulnerable members of humanity. Current economic trouble is just one of the factors, together with armed conflicts, climate change, demographic growth and food shortages, creating a complicated and challenging framework for humanitarian activities. In such circumstances, the UNHCR has an important role in coordinating the international response in case of refugees' crisis or in dealing with protracted refugees' situations.

Bulgaria believes in the central role that the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness have in the context of the international humanitarian law. These anniversaries are not just a numerical expression of the two Conventions' existence. This event provides the UNHCR with a significant opportunity to bring forced displacement and statelessness issues to the centre of the international attention and to further reinforce core international protection principles and values.

Bulgaria is fully attached to the fundamental and universal values of human rights, freedom, solidarity and preservation of the human dignity. We call on all States to continue to cooperate with the UNHCR in good faith in order to fully implement these values.

Mr. Chairperson,

Bulgaria ratified the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1992. Subsequently, in 2002 the Bulgarian Parliament adopted the Law on Asylum and Refugees which is the main national legal instrument, guaranteeing special protection for the asylum-seekers on the territory of Bulgaria. The European Union's *acquis communautaire* related to asylum is also part of the national legislation since 2007.

Preliminary work for the accession of Bulgaria to the 1954 UN Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons and 1961 UN Convention on the reduction of statelessness has been done, including proposals for changing the legal framework guaranteeing the implementation of our commitments under the Conventions.

Mr. Chairperson,

The specific geographic location of my country determines the important role Bulgaria can play in fighting against the illegal migration and the human trafficking in the region of South Eastern Europe thus creating long term opportunities for better protection of the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

Bulgaria is not seriously affected by refugees' problems. Nevertheless, we are committed to implement an effective national refugees' integration policy by further improving some internal procedures and developing a National Program for Integration of Refugees.

Bulgaria is fully committed to the development of the Common European Asylum System, an important component of which is resettlement. It is also a significant international protection tool and a durable solution for refugees as well as an important way to show solidarity with third countries. In this context, we are developing a pilot programme for resettlement of a number of persons in Bulgaria, recognized as refugees in third countries under the UNHCR mandate and in need of this form of protection. The programme is due to begin in 2013. Furthermore, guided by the understanding of the burden sharing solidarity with countries, suffering an excessive influx of asylum seekers, Bulgaria has joined the second phase of the EUREMA project by sending a proposal to relocate four persons recognized as refugees in Malta.

We firmly believe that finding durable solutions for vulnerable groups of refugees – unaccompanied minors, young mothers and victims of trafficking, should remain as an important element of the cooperation between the Bulgarian government and the NGOs.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the context of the contemporary challenges, Bulgaria, as a member of the Executive Committee of UNHCR, is committed to continue actively working at national, regional and international level for creating better conditions for those in need of refuge and reducing the number of people, living without nationality.

We believe that UNHCR has a unique and outstanding role to play in dealing with refugees' problems and we will spare no effort to contribute to further strengthening the capacity of the Organization.

Thank you very much for your attention.