

Statement
by
H.E. Ms. Lachezara Stoeva,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria to the UN
at 17th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD
New York, 11-13 June 2024

Mr.Chair,

Allow me to start by congratulating you and the Bureau on the excellent stewardship of the Conference. You can count on Bulgaria's continued support.

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union, and I would like to add a few points in my national capacity.

This year's theme on rethinking disability inclusion in the current international juncture and ahead of the Summit of the Future is timely and crucial. Bulgaria is committed to supporting persons with disabilities in exercising their rights through our policies on employment, accessibility, and social inclusion. We have taken significant steps over the past decades and especially since 2018 to reform the social sphere and improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities.

Promoting employment for persons with disabilities is a key priority for Bulgaria. Various measures, such as financial support for employers, workplace adaptation, and personal assistance, have been introduced to reduce the employment gap between persons with and without disabilities. For instance, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities provides financial support to employers for access, adaptation, and workplace equipment, benefiting persons with permanent disabilities. This includes reimbursing 30% of the insurance contributions paid by employers for employed persons with disabilities. Additionally, specialized enterprises receive funding to ensure employment and technological renewal, creating jobs for long-term unemployed individuals with disabilities.

Bulgaria's National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities (2021-2030) is aligned with CRPD and puts an emphasis on socio-economic support, inclusive employment, and social entrepreneurship. Since 2019, the National Program for Accessible Living Environment and Personal Mobility has been implemented annually to build accessible environments and ensure personal mobility. The standardized package of services created for persons with disabilities builds on other services and provides comprehensive support for sustainable employment.

Bulgaria also focuses on international cooperation to promote technology innovations for an inclusive future. The "Provision of aid for persons with permanent disabilities" project under the Bulgaria's Recovery and Sustainability Plan provides high-tech mobility aid, supporting around 3 300 individuals with permanent disabilities.

In conclusion, Bulgaria reaffirms its commitment to the full inclusion of persons with disabilities, as Stevie Wonder reminds us "just because a man lacks the use of his eyes doesn't mean he lacks vision." We are convinced that societies can only succeed by empowering all individuals and ensuring that persons with disabilities realize their full potential. We all need to work together to achieve this goal.

Thank you!