**Report on the national implementation in the Republic of Bulgaria of**

**Resolution 3 Sexual and gender-based violence: Joint action on prevention and response (32IC/15/R3)**

Bulgaria supports all efforts aimed at ensuring the full and equal participation of women at all levels ranging from conflict prevention to post-conflict reconstruction, peace and security, as well as the prevention and elimination of sexual violence in conflict. Bulgaria has long traditions in the promotion of gender equality and is constantly upgrading its national legislation with the aim to integrate a gender perspective in all policies, strategies and programs. Bulgaria is committed to advance women’s participation in decision-making in peace and security processes in order to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of all conflict prevention and resolution efforts, as well as women’s participation in national-level peace and security policies and programs.

* Various activities have been undertaken at national and international level in prevention and response to the sexual and gender-based violence by different Bulgarian institutions

- Bulgaria has become a partner to the Call for Action on Protection from Gender-based violence in Emergencies (in April 2018), aiming to work towards ensuring that every humanitarian response provides both safe and comprehensive services for those affected by GBV and mitigates GBV risk from the earliest onset of a humanitarian crisis. Our country's accession to the Call is in line with our active human rights policy, in particular women's and girls' rights, and gives a clear political signal to our commitment to the protection from gender-based violence in emergencies. Several national commitments, both at internal and international level, were undertaken. In April 2019 an Action Plan for the implementation of the commitments made by the Republic of Bulgaria on the Call for Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies was adopted. The plan contains specific objectives and measures for the implementation until 2020, in close cooperation with competent national institutions internally, as well as at regional and global level.

- In March 2018, Bulgaria joined the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, launched at the World Humanitarian Summit (Istanbul, 23-24 May 2016). The accession of our country to the Charter is in line with our active policy on the rights of people with disabilities and gives a clear political signal for our close commitment to the protection of their rights.

- Bulgaria actively promotes the role of women in peace and security and is fully committed to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related Resolutions (1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122 and 2422) which frame the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Translating words into effective results, Bulgaria aims at finalizing its National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related Resolutions.

* As part of the national measures for implementation of the strategic framework, **the Ministry of Defense (MoD)** has elaborated and implements the „Plan for implementation of Resolution 1325 of the UNSC in the MoD“. The progress made in the recent years is a result of the consistent cooperation of the MoD with other stakeholders, in particular the Bulgarian Armed Forces Women Association (BAFWA).

- The four main goals of the strategic framework are being implemented in the Armed Forces (AF) of the Republic of Bulgaria.

1. Institutionalization – by creating functional responsibilities and coordination in the AF’s system for the real implementation and development of human rights and gender equality policies; introduces the implementation of the gender equality policies.

2. Participation – by creating opportunities for inclusion of women in all levels of the defense system, by establishing a balanced approach for women's participation in decision-making processes, by maintaining sustainable human resources management in view of the increasing number of crises of different type. There is a tendency of increasing the participation of women on military service in the missions and operations of all international organizations (for the period 2014 – 2018 the average participation rate of women is 9.4%, reaching 12.5% in some years). Women are very well represented in the military medical teams and various humanitarian and peacekeeping missions in Africa, Asia, especially in GENAD/GPF and CIMIK TEAMS.

All positions in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria are open to women and men and there is a gradual increase in the participation of women in defense.

3. Protection – establishing a transparent system for registration, identification and investigation of cases of discrimination and violence within the AF in the country and during missions and tasks outside the territory of the country. One of the main goals of the Ministry of Defense, through the Military Medical Academy (MMA) is to ensure equal access to medical care with the required quality of all Bulgarian citizens.

* A MoD hotline (published on the MoD website) is made available for signals and complaints.
* Psychological assistance is as part of the program "Social Adaptation of Servicemen Discharged from Military Service" to women and men under military service who independently sought help to overcome the stress associated with the transition from the military to the civilian profession.
* A project has been implemented to raise awareness among women of the Bulgarian Army and their families about breast cancer, cervical cancer, sterility and osteoporosis. All health measures are in addition to the national programs and with an emphasis on prophylactic examination for servicemen and civilians, men and women, from the system of the Ministry of Defense and the Bulgarian Army. Every year, free-of-charge campaigns are conducted at the Military Medical Academy for the prevention of the diseases.

1. Prevention – creating platforms, processes, projects, innovative policies, approaches and practices which support the implementation and updating of the international topic on Women, Peace and Security in the MoD. The structure of the system of defense and national security, and in particular, the hierarchical principle of unanimity in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria, are the basic prerequisite for active work on the implementation of the integrated approach for equal treatment of military men and women in the policies, in the training and preparation processes, in planning and implementation, including regulation in all levels and areas of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria. For the Ministry of Defense, the promotion of equal participation of men and women in decision-making and women's empowerment is of particular importance in connection with the implementation of international projects within NATO and the "Process of Ministerial Meetings of Southeastern Europe" (SEDM), with leading country Bulgaria.

* An international project "Female Leaders in Security and Defense (FLSD), was developed with the objective to emphasize the process of improving the capabilities of utilizing all human potential and integrating the equality of women and men in the strategic, operational and tactical planning processes, the development of capabilities and readiness of forces considering the enhancement of the strategic and operational effectiveness of the armed forces and security systems.
* As a result of its focused work on the project, Bulgaria has presided the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives for the period 2015 - 2017. The main contribution of the Bulgarian Presidency is the introduction of a modern electronic mechanism for generalizing the database received from Member States and partners to the Committee, as well as the preparation of the first NCGP report/analysis, published on NATO's official website.

- A fundamental principle in the implementation of gender equality policy is zero tolerance towards all acts of violence in the AF.

- MoD maintains a database on the participation of women and men in decision-making processes (management/command positions) and participation in missions of the UN, EU, NATO, OSCE and other international organizations outside the country. A section dedicated to "GENDER" is maintained on the MoD website.

* In Bulgaria various activities at national level are being implemented by **the Ministry of the Interior**. Directorate-General for National Police is a partner in the international projects related to the topic "Sexual and gender-based violence":

- *“Pro Victims Justice - Improving the situation of victims of crime and stakeholder engagement”* with international partners being Romania, Germany and Sweden. As a result of the project, a "Mechanism for Targeting Victims of Crime in National and Cross-Border Cases" was elaborated, and a " Victims of Crime Guide", both of which are available in English and Bulgarian on the project website: https: // provictimsjustice. prorefugiu.org/bg.

* In January 2019 a series of trainings of police officers, representatives of the judiciary, health and social workers, the relevant institutions and other interested parties were conducted with the aim to improve the interaction between all relevant stakeholders - institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and citizens to support victims of crime.

- *“Effective Criminal Justice Strategies and Practices for Combat Gender-Based Domestic Violence in Eastern Europe”*. The project was initiated by the OSCE and its partners are Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary; several Bulgarian State institutions are involved - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice through the National Institute of Justice, the Prosecutor's Office, representatives of the academic community and NGOs. One of the main objectives of the project is to increase the willingness of victims to report acts of violence by enhancing the effectiveness of law enforcement and judicial authorities, investigative institutions, medical professionals and social workers. The project provided various training for police officers, prosecutors and judges. Information materials have been prepared.