STATEMENT

BY H.E. AMBASSADOR STEPHAN TAFROV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
IN THE GENERAL DISCUSSION ON A.I. 62 “REPORT OF THE UN HIGH
COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES”
AT THE 68-TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY THIRD COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairperson,

On behalf of my delegation I would like to thank the High Commissioner for the comprehensive report before us, for his personal dedication and for the dedication of his team to the International Humanitarian Law and to the protection and assistance of the refugees and other displaced persons.

Bulgaria aligned itself with the statement made earlier today by the EU delegation and fully supports it. In my statement I will focus on issues of particular importance for my country.

Mr. Chairperson,

Bulgaria welcomes the process of institutional reform initiated by the High Commissioner with the ultimate goal to enhance the accountability of the UNHCR to the international community, including the donors and the persons in need of assistance.

My country further commends the comprehensive review of capacities, resources and expertise conducted by the Office of the UNHCR in search of a structural response to the complex emergencies.

Bulgaria will continue to follow closely and to support the UNHCR’s humanitarian response to the rapidly growing number of human rights situations around the globe.

The International community has the ultimate responsibility to address the multi layer human rights situation in Syria. The recently announced estimations that by the next year, another 2 million Syrians will become refugees and other 2 million people will become IDPs within the country put an unprecedented burden on all of us.
I would like to express our solidarity to the neighboring countries of Syria which are most affected by this grave humanitarian crises. My country is also facing an exceptional situation with the intensive and increasing refugee flow to our borders.

Such massive refugee flee requires coordinated national and international response and solidarity. Bulgaria is very grateful of the support received and will continue to work closely with all relevant international organizations and members of the international community to enhance its capacity of accommodating the growing number of refugees. Further assistance and resources to better address the legitimate demands of the persons seeking asylum would be highly appreciated.

In the hard times of financial restrictions my country has provided humanitarian assistance for the people who left Syria as follows:

- In December, 2012 - 200 000 BGN through UNHCR for Syrian refugees in countries neighboring Syria;
- In February, 2013 - 300 000 BGN through the WFP for the destitute population in Syria;
- In April, 2013 - 98 600 doses of tetanus and diphtheria shots for the needs of Syrian refugees on the territory of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan;
- In September, 2013, the Council of Ministers adopted a decree to grant 100,000 BGN to UNWRA while expressing the wish that these funds be used for the Palestinian refugees who fled the conflict in Syria.

Recently, about 8 800 people have applied for refugee status. By the end of the year, up to 16,000 people are expected to seek asylum in Bulgaria. The capacities of the centers for temporary accommodation have long been filled. The authorities are looking for additional facilities and funding to accommodate the rapidly growing number of refugees.

Bulgaria has a long lasting tradition to give shelter to people in need. Nevertheless, in our recent history we have not faced such a challenge. We had to overcome this lack of experience by enhancing the administrative capacity and by exploring all possibilities of technical and expert assistance.

The Government adopted an Action Plan, which includes the following important measures:
- Preparation of a joint expenses estimate in view of the expected wave of refugees.
- Review of the annual budgets of government departments with the view of reallocating budgetary resources for receiving the refugee flow.
- Initiation of the DREF (Disaster Relief Emergency Fund) procedure for immediate financial and humanitarian assistance through the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent.
- Review, evaluation and proposals to update the existing state institutional and interagency plans for contingency response and crisis management.
- Healthcare and monitoring of the incoming refugees. Proposal and/or review of effective health monitoring mechanisms for incoming migrants.
- Bilateral dialogues with our neighbours Turkey and Greece in view of joint efforts to managing the refugee flow.
The Bulgarian authorities are working in close cooperation with the Office of UNHCR in Sofia as well as with the representatives of the International Organization of Migration and the World Health Organization. With the assistance of UNICEF special attention is being paid to the needs of refugee children. The civil society is also heavily involved.

I would especially like to underline the importance of European solidarity in our efforts to respond adequately to this unprecedented situation. The support of our EU partners is crucial for the success of our work to implement the high standards of protection of people seeking shelter.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairperson, I would like to thank the High Commissioner for accepting the invitation to visit Bulgaria by the end of this year and to support personally the Bulgarian authorities in their commitment to work continuously for more effective refugee care.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.