

UPR 15 – Serbia – 30 January 2013

STATEMENT by BULGARIA

Thank you, Mr President,

Bulgaria warmly welcomes the distinguished delegation of Serbia to the second UPR cycle, headed by Mrs Gordana Stamenic, State Secretary at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia.

At the outset, we confirm the political will of the Bulgarian Government for an upgrade of the bilateral relations, as agreed during the official visit of the Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs in Belgrade last December.

We note the positive measures which Serbia has been undertaking to improve its legislative and institutional framework, particularly in the area of human and minority rights protection. We encourage Serbia to reinvigorate and further develop the reform agenda. At the same time, relevant international and domestic experts point out various difficulties which hinder minority communities in exercising their constitutional rights in practice.

The Bulgarian national minority, in particular, faces significant challenges in preserving its specific ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity, including in the areas of education, information, official use of the minority language in all places of traditional habitation, etc. Furthermore, the socio-economic situation of the minority is worsening which is due also to the insufficient domestic investments in the respective municipalities.

In this regard, we would be interested to hear what steps the Government will take in order to improve this situation.

In this context, we would **recommend** to the Serbian authorities to ensure effective practical implementation of the standards guaranteed by the Serbian Constitution in the field of minority rights, including by further harmonising its legislation, providing adequate financial and administrative support to relevant institutions, preventing any forms of discrimination and prejudice in society and the media, and undertaking measures to achieve a more balanced socio-economic development among the regions in the country.

Thank you.