**Statement by Bulgaria**

United Nations Human Rights Council

46th session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review

***Review of the Republic of North Macedonia***

2 May 2024

Thank you, Mr. President,

Bulgaria welcomes the high-level delegation of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Bulgaria acknowledges that the Republic of North Macedonia has made progress regarding the equality of women and men, the empowerment of women and the protection of the rights of the young people, in line with our recommendations from the past UPR cycle.

Bulgaria encourages the Republic of North Macedonia to strengthen the protection of the rights of its citizens, by pursuing all necessary reforms, including by fulfilling the commitment to amend the country’s Constitution.

Therefore, Bulgaria would like to make the following recommendations:

1. Take further measures to improve and implement the legislation and policies against discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes, especially on ethnic grounds.
2. Bring the Law on Associations and Foundations in conformity with the established international standards, in order to exclude the possibility for retroactive de-registration of non-governmental organizations on arbitrary grounds.

Furthermore, Bulgaria reiterates the recommendations, that the Republic of North Macedonia accepted during the Second and Third UPR cycles but did not implement, namely:

1. Ensure that no disadvantage shall result for the citizens from the exercise of their right to identify as belonging to a specific ethnic group.
2. Eliminate the impediments to the preservation, expression and development of the cultural heritage and identity of the citizens of the country, regardless of their ethnicity.

We wish the delegation of the Republic of North Macedonia a successful review!

Thank you, Mr. President.