



**Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria  
to the United Nations, the Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe and  
Other International Organisations in Vienna**

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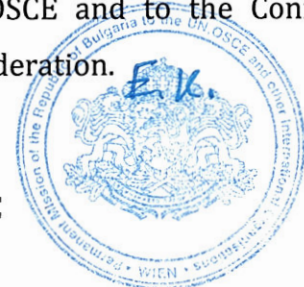
**NOTE VERBALE**

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria to the UN, the OSCE and Other International Organisations in Vienna presents its compliments to the Permanent Missions and Delegations of all participating States to the OSCE and to the Conflict Prevention Centre of the OSCE, and in accordance with Decision No.2/09 of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation has the honour to submit herewith enclosed the response of the Republic of Bulgaria to the Questionnaire on the *Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security*. The response also contains relevant information on *Women, Peace and Security* as well as on *Children and Armed Conflict*.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria to the UN, the OSCE and Other International Organisations in Vienna avails itself of the opportunity to renew to Permanent Missions and Delegations of all participating States to the OSCE and to the Conflict Prevention Centre of the OSCE the assurances of its highest consideration.

**ALL PERMANENT MISSIONS AND DELEGATIONS TO THE OSCE  
THE CONFLICT PREVENTION CENTER**

**VIENNA**



**OSCE CODE OF CONDUCT ON POLITICO-MILITARY ASPECTS OF SECURITY**

**REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

**INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

**ON THE CODE OF CONDUCT ON POLITICO-MILITARY ASPECTS OF SECURITY**

**As of April 15, 2024**

**INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

**ON THE CODE OF CONDUCT ON POLITICO-MILITARY ASPECTS OF SECURITY**

**REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

**Section I: Inter-State elements**

**1. Account of measures to prevent and combat terrorism**

**1.1. (a) International agreements and arrangements related to preventing and combating terrorism to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party:**

- Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft, signed at Tokyo on 14 September 1963;
- Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft, signed at The Hague on 16 December 1970;
- Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation, signed at Montreal on 23 September 1971;
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 14 December 1973;
- International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 17 December 1979;
- Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (1980);
- Protocol on the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation, supplementary to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation, signed at Montreal on 24 February 1988;
- Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation, done at Rome on 10 March 1988;
- Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf, done at Rome on 10 March 1988;
- Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection, signed at Montreal on 1 March 1991;
- International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 15 December 1997;
- International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9 December 1999;
- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the three Protocols to the Convention;
- Convention on the Safety of the United Nations and Associated Personnel, 9 December 1994;

- European Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism, signed at Strasbourg on 11 September 1997 and the Protocol to the European Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism ratified on 26 February 2004;
- The Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism ratified in June 2006.

The Republic of Bulgaria has also ratified the main international legal instruments in the field of extradition and judicial co-operation on criminal matters:

- European Convention on Extradition (State Gazette, issue 8/1999 and 9/1995);
- Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Extradition and Second Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Extradition (State Gazette, issue 9/1995);
- European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (State Gazette, issue 8/1995) and the two Protocols to the Convention;
- Convention on Transfer of Sentenced Persons (State Gazette, issue 8/1995).

**1.1. (b) Accession to and participation in other multilateral and bilateral agreements or measures undertaken to prevent and combat terrorist activities.**

The Republic of Bulgaria is party to the following Multilateral and Bilateral Agreements Containing Clauses on Cooperation in the Suppression of Terrorism:

- Agreement on Cooperation to Prevent and Combat Cross-Border Crime signed on 26 May 1999 within the framework of the Initiative of Cooperation in South Eastern Europe;
- Agreement among the Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in particular in its Organized Forms, signed on 2 October 1998;
- Cooperation Agreement among the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Government of Romania and the Government of the Republic of Turkey in Combating Terrorism, Organized Crime, Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, Money Laundering, Arms and Human Trafficking and Other Major Crimes signed on 6 April 1998;
- Protocol for Enhanced Trilateral Cooperation in Combating Crime and Especially Cross-Border Crime among the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of Romania signed on 8 September 1998;
- Treaty of Understanding, Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of Bulgaria and the French Republic (State Gazette, issue 94/1993);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Kingdom of Belgium on Police Cooperation and Protocol to Article 1 of the Agreement (subject to ratification, State Gazette, issue 29/2001);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Kingdom of Spain on Cooperation in the Fight against Crime (State Gazette, issue 12/2000);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and Government of the Italian Republic on Police Cooperation in the Fight against Organized Crime (State Gazette, issue 58/2001);
- Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministry of Public Order of the Republic of Albania signed on 24.01.1994 in Tirana and Protocol of Understanding between the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministry of Public Order of the Republic of Albania signed on 7 November 2000 in Tirana;

- Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministry of Public Order of the Hellenic Republic signed at Athens on 8 July 1991 and Protocol for the Implementation of the Agreement on Cooperation signed on 22 February 1996 in Sofia;
- Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Macedonia signed on 20 October 1992 in Skopje;
- Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministry of the Interior of Romania signed on 26 February 1992 in Bucharest and Protocol-Appendix to the Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministry of the Interior of Romania signed on 21 December 1995 in Sofia;
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on Cooperation in the Fight against Organized Crime, Illicit Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors Trafficking, Terrorism and Other Serious Crimes signed on 5 November 2001 in Ljubljana;
- Agreement on Cooperation between the Republic of Bulgaria and the European Police Office /Europol Convention/ signed on 17 June 2003;
- Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Bulgaria on the Participation of the Republic of Bulgaria in the European Union Police Mission /EUPM/ in Bosnia and Herzegovina /BiH/, signed on 9 January 2003;
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Republic of Turkey for police cooperation, (State Gazette, issue 70/2001);
- Agreement for cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Government of Romania and the Government of the Republic of Turkey in the area of the fight against terrorism, organized crime, traffic of drugs and psychotropic substances, money laundry, traffic of weapons and people and other heavy crimes (State Gazette, issue 75/2001);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for cooperation in the fight against organized crime, illegal traffic of narcotic psychotropic substances and precursors, terrorism and other heavy crimes (State Gazette, issue 84/2002);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for cooperation in the fight against terrorism, organized crime, illegal traffic of narcotic substances and precursors, illegal migration and other heavy crimes (State Gazette, issue 62/2003);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of Romania for cooperation in the fight against organized crime, illegal traffic of drugs and psychotropic substances, terrorism and other heavy crimes (State Gazette, issue 26/2004);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Republic of South Africa for police cooperation (State Gazette, issue 5/2005);
- Agreement on Police Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Republic of Turkey signed on 2 February 2005;
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for police cooperation (State Gazette, issue 10/2008);

- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania for cooperation in the area of countering terrorism, organized crime, illegal traffic as well as other crimes (State Gazette, issue 51/2008);
- Memorandum for cooperation between the Ministry of interior of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Federal Department of Justice and Police of Switzerland for police cooperation in the fight against crime (State Gazette, issue 30/2009);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of Malta for police cooperation (State Gazette, issue 52/2009);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Republic of Serbia for police cooperation (State Gazette, issue 11/ 2011);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Republic of Hungary for cooperation in the prevention and combating of crime (State Gazette, issue 49/2011);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of Georgia for cooperation in the fight against crime (State Gazette, issue 59/2011);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on cooperation in the fight against crime, signed on 24 April 2012 in Sofia;
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan on cooperation in the fight against crime, signed in Baku on 27 April 2012;
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Republic of Croatia on police cooperation, signed on 14 June 2012;
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Republic of Kosovo on police cooperation, signed on 13 September 2012 in Sofia;
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the United States of America for enhancing the cooperation in the prevention and fight against heavy crime, signed on 10 October 2012 in Sofia, ratified on 30 January 2013;
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the State of Kuwait for cooperation in the field of internal security, signed on 30 August 2013;
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Portuguese Republic on cooperation in the fight against crime, signed on 20 August 2014;
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on cooperation in the prevention and combating crime, signed on 10 November 2017;
- Agreement between the government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Federal Council of the Swiss Confederation on police cooperation in the fight against crime, signed on 03 December 2019;
- Agreement between the government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of Montenegro on police cooperation, signed on 26 May 2020.

## **1.2. National Legislation**

Bulgaria has ratified 12 international Conventions and Protocols, relating to terrorism.

The following regulatory acts of the domestic legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria are related to the suppression of terrorism:

- National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (State Gazette, issue 19/2011, updated State Gazette, issue 26/2018)
- Military Doctrine;
- Military Strategy;
- White paper 2010 on Defence;
- National strategy (2015-2020) and Annual Action plans for Combating Radicalization and Terrorism (Decree No. 1039 of 30 December 2015 of the Council of Ministers);
- Penal Code;
- Code of Criminal Procedure;
- Law on Special Intelligence Means;
- Law on Control over Explosives, Fire Arms and Ammunition;
- Law on the Export Control of Arms and Dual-Use Items and Technologies;
- Law for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and Control over Toxic Chemical Substances and Their Precursors;
- Law on Measures against Financing of Terrorism;
- Law on Measures against Money Laundering;
- Law on the Ministry of the Interior;
- Law on Bulgarian Identity Documents;
- Regulations of Application of the Law on the Ministry of the Interior;
- Ordinance No. 17 of 14 December 1999 on the Conditions and Procedure of Attaining Civil Air Traffic Security;
- Decree No. 39 of 27 March 2000 of the Council of Ministers in implementation of Resolution 1267 (1999) of the UN Security Council “Freezing of Financial Resources Owned or Controlled by the Taliban Group”;
- Special Decree No. 277 of the Council of Ministers of 12.12.2001 regarding the Measures to Combat International Terrorism Envisaged in Resolution 1373 (2001).
- Bulgaria’s Counterterrorism Act (2016)

The 2016 specific law determines counterterrorism as a comprehensive, nationwide activity with 3 main goals, namely: protection of human rights, prevention and development of counteraction mechanisms and risks indicators. Under the Counterterrorism Act the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria also have a key participation in combating terrorism. They have operative counterterrorism functions and supporting functions in overcoming the consequences of terrorist acts. The Act also envisages parliamentary control through a National Assembly Standing Committee, to be carried out over the procedures for anti-terrorist preventive measures.

- Amendment of Bulgaria’s Penal Code (2015)

EU Directive 2017/541 on combating terrorism and Security Council Resolution 2178/2014  
 The EU Directive 2017/541 on combating terrorism came into force on 20 April 2017. EU Member States were obliged to incorporate the Directive’s provisions into their national legislation by 8 September 2018. The foundations of the legal construction for terrorism lie in UN Security Council Resolutions 1269/1999, 1368/2001 and 1373/2001, the Council of Europe Framework Decision on combating terrorism 2002/475, as amended and further developed by Resolution 2178/2014, by the European Council Framework Decision 2008/919 and the EU Directive 2017/541. Both the Framework Decisions and the Directive set out the grounds and starting point for national

legislation to proceed in assessing terrorist offenses and in criminalizing acts of terror. The parameters have to ensure similarity and comparability between national legislations, thus facilitating international cooperation in criminal proceedings. The Bulgarian Criminal Code incorporated these provisions of international legal instruments which are largely reflected after 2015 in the Penal Code. Ensuring adequate criminal protection against terrorism was the main task of the 2015 amendment of Bulgaria's Penal Code. The new provisions came to fill the loopholes in the law especially in the context of the potential threat of terrorist acts, but mostly to react to the need for compliance with the requirements of UN Security Council Resolution 2178/2014 on combating terrorism. The various measures were to reduce potential threats (FTF's, planning or preparing of terrorist acts, supporting of terrorist acts, avoiding any conditions providing safe haven for terrorists). Certain preliminary activities aimed at committing terrorist crimes abroad, including border-crossing in connection with participation in or training for terrorist activity are also criminalized as required by UNSC Resolution 2178. The consent of a person to be trained for terrorist activities is also incriminated. The preparatory arrangements by a foreign national in the territory of Bulgaria for committing a terrorist crime abroad, to which, as a general rule, Bulgaria's Criminal Code would not apply, have been criminalized.

The National Strategy (2015 – 2020) and annual Action Plans on countering radicalisation and terrorism have been adopted to confront related threats. They envisaged strengthening enforcement and control measures and early prevention of radicalisation, with a special emphasis on prevention. The documents involve a multi-institutional approach and close cooperation between authorities at the local and national level, as well as between different stakeholders, like police, social workers, teachers, civil society and communities.

On 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023 the National Assembly adopted a Law on the Ratification of the Agreement between the Contracting Parties to the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe (PCC SEE) on Automated Exchange of DNA Data, Dactyloscopic Data and Vehicle Registration Data and the Protocol of its Amendment (entered into force on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023)

### **1.3 Roles and missions of military, paramilitary and security forces and the police in preventing and combating terrorism.**

According to the national strategic documents the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria participate in the fight against terrorism as on a national level they provide assistance and support to the specialized national structures and on an international level they perform allied obligations. On the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria the Armed Forces can take part in all stages of counterterrorism: prevention of threats, crisis management as a result of terrorist activities and to mitigate the consequences of those acts. To implement their allied obligations the Armed Forces participate in counter and anti-terrorism operations conducted by NATO's command structures and programs of the Alliance for countering terrorism.

The White Paper on Defense and the Armed Forces stipulates that the first mission of the Armed Forces is to guarantee the state's sovereignty and independence, and to defend the territorial integrity of the state and of NATO member-states through article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. At the same time, the Armed Forces should provide complementary capabilities to support international peace and security and to contribute to the national security in peace time.

The mission to support the international peace and security includes carrying out international and coalition commitments to participate in NATO and EU operations in response to crises; partaking in missions of the UN, the OSCE and other coalition structures; arms control related activities; the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction; international military partnerships; the provision of humanitarian relief; and the consolidation of trust and security.



The contribution to the national security in peace time includes: building/maintaining early warning capabilities for potential risks and threats; activities for control of sea and air space; deterrence operations; neutralising terrorist, extremist and criminal groups; protection and defence of strategic sites; protection and support to the population in case of natural disasters, industrial accidents and ecological crises; unexploded ordnance disposal; providing humanitarian relief; support to migration control; search and rescue activities; support when necessary to other government organisations and local authorities to prevent and overcome the consequences of terrorist attacks, natural disasters, industrial accidents, ecological crises and epidemics.

### **Ministry of Interior:**

Among the main activities performed by the Ministry of Interior are the protection of the national security and the prevention and countering of terrorist activities. For this purpose has been established the General Directorate "Gendarmerie, Special Operations and Combating Terrorism" (GDGSOCT).

The General Directorate "Gendarmerie, Special Operations and Combating Terrorism" (GDGSOCT) is a national specialized structure for carrying out the following activities:

1. Preventing and suppressing terrorist acts;
2. Releasing hostages;
3. Detaining and/or neutralizing particularly dangerous criminals or criminal groups;
4. Providing a safety zone against potential attacks through snipers;
5. Detecting, identifying and neutralizing explosive devices and explosives, as well as developing technical means and methods for carrying out these activities;
6. Performing physico-chemical research and expert evaluation of explosive devices and their elements, of explosives, documents and unknown substances;
7. Protecting public order during mass events;
8. Restoring, maintain and protect public order in the event of riots;
9. Protecting public order in crises;
10. Carrying out preventive activities for prevention and suppression of crimes and protection of public order;
11. Rendering assistance to the bodies of the other general directorates and to the regional directorates for protection of public order;
12. Participating in police operations or joint operations with other state bodies;
13. Providing security for employees in the administration of state authorities in the presence of a specific threat, in connection with the exercise of their functions;
14. Rendering assistance to other state bodies or officials, when their activity is illegally obstructed;
15. Carrying out protection of strategic and critical infrastructures, sites of the ministry of interior and diplomatic missions;
16. Providing protection of special cargoes;
17. Participating in the implementation of control for the observance of the rules for traffic on the roads outside the populated areas.

The General Directorate for Combating Organised Crime (GDCOC) is a national specialised structure for countering organised crime related to:

1. customs regime, monetary, tax and social security systems;
2. narcotic substances, their analogues and precursors;
3. computer crimes or crimes committed in or through computer networks and systems;
4. intellectual property;
5. false or counterfeit currency, payment instruments and official documents;
6. trafficking in human beings, smuggling across the border of the country of individuals or groups of people, as well as assisting foreigners to reside in or to cross illegally the borders of the country;
7. trafficking in cultural goods;
8. firearms, explosive, chemical, biological and other generally dangerous means and substances, as well as weapons, dual-use items and technologies;
9. corruption in public authorities;
10. acts of terrorism, use of generally dangerous means and substances, instilling fear, hostage-taking, kidnapping of persons for the purpose of obtaining material benefits and acts of violence;
11. money laundering and gambling;
12. concluding unfavourable contracts, money laundering and fraudulent use of European Union funds.

GDCOC carries out international cooperation independently or jointly with other structures of the Ministry of Interior.

In the beginning of 2023 the Cyber department of GDCOC has been transformed into a directorate and its capacity has been considerably increased.

#### **1.4. Provide any additional relevant information on national efforts to prevent combat terrorism**

In September 2020 Bulgaria adopted *Integrated Border Management Strategy*. It includes the following main components:

1. Conducting search and rescue operations at sea;
2. Comprehensive risk analysis; quality control mechanism;
3. Full cooperation between national authorities responsible for border control or other tasks performed at the border;
4. Enhanced cooperation between Member States;
5. Enhanced cooperation with third countries;
6. Some new technical and operational measures within the Schengen area;
7. Return of illegally residing third-country nationals;
8. Use of the most up to date technologies and best practices for border management and solidarity mechanisms.

- **Counter-Terrorism Action Plan on Afghanistan (September 2021)**

Bulgaria implements the recommendations from the Counter-Terrorism Action Plan on Afghanistan, developed by the Council of the EU (“Justice and Home Affairs”) in coordination with the Commission services, the EEAS, the Presidency and relevant EU JHA agencies. It sets out 23 recommendations for action, which are divided into four areas: I) security checks – prevent infiltration; II) strategic intelligence/foresight: prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terrorist groups; III) monitor and counter propaganda and mobilisation; IV) tackle organised crime as a source of terrorist financing. Close cooperation with international partners will be key in all these areas.

– **Border controls/ travel document security**

Systematic comprehensive checks are carried out by the competent Bulgarian authorities for all arrivals from Afghanistan and other 3rd countries at the earliest possible stage of travel.

Bulgaria maintains a high level of cooperation with Member States and EUROPOL in exchanging information in order to detect, trace, monitor and intercept possible terrorists. This exchange has intensified in the aftermath of the conflict in Afghanistan. Bulgaria as a rule has always been carrying out systematic border checks along the external EU borders.

Bulgaria has established clearly defined procedures for security checks. We implement a technical solution allowing consultation with a single inquiry in all available EU and national data bases, as well as the LSTD data base of Interpol. The relevant risk indicators elaborated by FRONTEX are being used by the security checks at the borders. Good level of cooperation and coordination is maintained between the law enforcement and border authorities from the one side and the security services from the other. This practice has proved to be well functioning and many FTFs were detected while attempting to enter the territory of the country. Bulgaria is successfully applying an effective mechanism for involving security services officers in the interviews with asylum seekers. Interpreters from rare languages and psychologists also take part in the interviews.

We also use additional methods for identification of the persons and their origin, e.g. software for facial recognition.

– **Use of Internet and other information networks for terrorist purposes**

1. Preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online – May 2021 the European Parliament approved the **Terrorist Content Online (TCO)** regulation addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online, the spread of hatred, violence and terrorist propaganda online. It should be implemented by the Member States by June 2022. The rules will ensure that online texts, images, sound and video recordings encouraging or enabling terrorist offences will be swiftly removed. Bulgaria is under preparation for implementing the provisions of the regulation.
2. There are cases of online propaganda, which are identified in Bulgarian internet space. These cases are detected by specialized Cybercrime unit within the Ministry of Interior.

Bulgaria is actively participating in all relevant formats to the Council of the EU related to counter-terrorism issues. In 2023 a total of 8 meetings of Terrorism Working Party within the Swedish and Spanish Presidency of the Council of EU were held. The Ministry of Interior, in close cooperation with the State Agency for National Security, prepared the Bulgarian position on the topics of the agenda of these meetings. In 2023 the following non-binding documents at EU level were discussed and respectively adopted:

1. Council Conclusions on dealing with individuals released from prison who may represent a potential terrorist threat;
2. Document on the use of 3d-printed weapons for terrorist purposes;
3. Council Conclusions on improving support and recognition of victims of terrorism.

Furthermore, representatives of MoI participate in numerous working groups and formats, such as the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), the Management Board on Radicalization to the EC

and the Network on Preventive Policies, where the different aspects of prevention of radicalization are discussed.

In the context of the global conflict such as the war against Ukraine and the conflict between Israel and Hamas, ongoing discussions are carried out in order to guarantee a common EU response to these security threats, e.g. from the point of view of terrorism, radicalization and violent extremism. Bulgaria is part of the joint EU efforts to timely and adequately address all security challenges.

Ongoing security dialogue is held between the EU institutions and Ukraine in order to strengthen the capacity in different areas, among which the monitoring and information exchange on foreign fighters from the battlefield area who could possibly enter the EU posing a threat of terrorism and violent extremism.

Regarding the conflict in the Middle East, the terrorist threat has many different dimensions. On one side, Bulgaria has taken measures to enhance the security of key infrastructure objects, but on the other side more and more threats are observed online. The social media are used for dissemination of violent and harmful content, aimed at disinformation and provoking of violence against vulnerable communities such as the Jewish one. In response Bulgaria is implementing a complex of measures on regular monitoring of the online dimension, in order to timely identify and remove illegal terrorist content. Close cooperation is carried out with other law enforcement authorities, the relevant security services, the EU agencies, mainly Europol and the private sector (providers of online services).

The constant migratory pressure coming from the MENA region requires ongoing measures on strengthening the external borders control in order to prevent the infiltration of persons involved in terrorist activities in the EU. Bulgaria is ensuring a high level of border control by an effective use of the available EU data bases and tools on information exchange allowing swift reaction in case of terrorist threat. Excellent level of cooperation is maintained with the national security services, in order to address all current challenges.

## **2. Stationing of armed forces on foreign territory**

### **2.1. Provide information on stationing of your State armed forces on the territory of other participating States in accordance with freely negotiated agreements as well as in accordance with international law.**

#### **Ministry of Defense**

The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria - Article 84, point 11 - introduces a permission regime concerning the sending of Bulgarian troops outside the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. With Decision N 23/1995 the Constitutional Court made an obligatory interpretation of Article 84, point 11, according to which the National Assembly has the exclusive competence to permit the sending of Bulgarian troops outside the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria on a case-by-case basis, when it is of military or military-political character. Respectively, the National Assembly adopts a decision, where the number and type of the Bulgarian troops is specified, as well as the location, timing and way of using them outside the territory of the country.

The permission for sending Bulgarian troops outside the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, when it is not of a military or military-political character, is given by other state bodies.

On 18 March 2004 the Bulgarian Parliament ratified the Washington Treaty, which entered into force for Bulgaria on 29 March 2004. As a member of NATO, the Republic of Bulgaria ratified the Agreement between the Parties to the North Atlantic Treaty Regarding the Status of Their Forces (NATO SOFA) and the other related documents.

The coming into effect of the new Law on Defence and Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria superseded the former law on sending and employment of Bulgarian forces outside the

territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, the subject having been now covered in the Law on Defence and Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria. In this connection, there are three bodies having decision-making authority regarding the sending of Bulgarian forces out of the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria: the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers, and the Minister of Defence.

The National Assembly gives permission for the sending and employment of Bulgarian forces out of the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria with political military purposes. The Council of Ministers gives permission for the sending and employment of Bulgarian forces out of the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria for the purposes of:

1. Carrying out allied commitments resulting from an international treaty, ratified, promulgated and in effect with regard to the Republic of Bulgaria, with which an alliance of a political military nature is established;
2. Participation in humanitarian missions;
3. Participation in activities of no political military nature.

The Minister of Defence gives permission to the dispatch and employment of Bulgarian forces out of the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria when the following conditions are observed:

1. Up to 300 servicemen and/or military equipment and/or up to three military aircraft, and/or one naval ship with their crews for participation in activities of no political and military nature;
2. Up to 600 servicemen and/or military equipment, and/or up to three naval ships inclusive, and/or up to five military aircraft with their crews on the territory of an allied state for participation in activities of no political and military nature;
3. Military medical teams and field hospitals for medical support of combat activities and/or prevention and coping with the consequences of epidemics and other mass diseases threatening the lives of a significant portion of the population in the respective area.

Bulgaria's participation with military forces in operations and missions out of national territory is defined in the Law on Defence and Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria. Currently Bulgaria participates in five Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations.

-Participation of the Republic of Bulgaria in the European Union missions and operations, inside or outside the OSCE area:

**EU Operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina** – with a Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 927 of 21.12.2023, the participation of a company and a national support element consisting of up to 140 servicemen and up to 50 units of military equipment was terminated. The Republic of Bulgaria participates in the operation with 12 personnel in EUFOR ALTHEA HQ in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**EU Naval Operation Atalanta** to prevent and deter piracy off the Somali coast – The Republic of Bulgaria is represented with one serviceman at the headquarters in Rota, Spain.

**The European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Operation IRINI** – The Republic of Bulgaria makes its contribution through the involvement of a liaison officer between the Operation Commander and the EU Military Staff.

**EU military training mission to train Mali's security forces** – with a Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 638 of 21.09.2023, the participation of a medical team of up to four military personnel from the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria with their personal weapons and equipment was terminated.

**EU Civilian Monitoring Mission in Georgia** – In 2022, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria participated in the mission with two servicemen.

**EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine** – In 2023, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria participated in the mission with one staff officer in the MPCC (Military Planning and Conduct Capability).

Participation of the Republic of Bulgaria in NATO missions and operations, inside or outside the OSCE area:

**NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR)** – In 2023 the Bulgarian contribution to the mission consisted of up to 35 servicemen. In addition, KFOR Operational Reserve Force constitutes a common reserve force for both KFOR and EU operation “Althea” in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Participation in NATO Standing Naval Forces** – Throughout 2023, the Bulgarian Navy participated in SNMG 2 with up to one staff officer. Moreover, in 2023 Bulgaria participated in the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Groups/SNMCMG 2 with up to one officer.

**NATO Mission in Iraq (NMI)** – In 2023 Bulgaria participates in NMI with up to 20 military personnel.

**The Ministry of Interior** participates in the following peacekeeping missions:

EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) - 2 police officers (2023)

EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM Georgia) - 3 police officers (2023) and 1 (2024)

Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor’s Office - 1 police officer (2023)

EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) - 1 police officer (2024)

### **3. Implementation of other international commitments related to the Code of Conduct**

In accordance with the decision of the National Assembly to provide technical support to Ukraine, adopted on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2023, an Agreement between the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine on the free provision of armoured transport vehicles was signed on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2023 in Sofia and on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023 in Kiev. The Agreement was ratified by the National Assembly and entered into force on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

#### **3.2. Provide information on how your State pursues arms control, disarmament and confidence- and security-building measures with a view to enhancing security and stability in the OSCE area.**

Implementation of CSBMs, through the reporting on the number of verification activities both received and conducted in 2023:

With a Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 775 of 02.11.2023 the Republic of Bulgaria suspended the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty). In 2023, activities in arms control and confidence- and security-building measures were held only within the framework of the CFE Treaty (until the suspension of its operation for Bulgaria) and under the Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures from 2011 (VD-2011): one visit to the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria and participation of formations from the Bulgarian armed forces in eight inspections and visits to formations abroad. These eight inspections and visits to formations abroad are as follows: a joint inspection of a certain area in Kazakhstan under the CFE

Treaty and, respectively, under the VD-2011: a visit to a military formation from the Land Forces of Ireland, a visit to assess a formation from the Armed Forces of the Republic of Malta, a visit to the Republic of Serbia, an inspection of a designated area in Switzerland, a visit to an airbase in Hungary, a visit to Croatia and a visit to an airbase in Romania. The Republic of Bulgaria did not conduct monitoring flights under the Treaty on Open Skies and did not receive any monitoring flights on its territory.

In the period April-August 2023 the Republic of Bulgaria assumed the rotating Chairpersonship of the main decision-making format in the politico-military dimension of the OSCE – the Forum for Security and Cooperation (FSC) in Vienna. In this capacity, from January 1 to December 31, 2023, the Republic of Bulgaria was also a member of the FSS Troika. The Security Dialogues during the Bulgarian Chairpersonship were dedicated to the following topics: the Black Sea Region – Security Horizons; Capacity Development in Humanitarian Mine Action; OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security (*International Humanitarian Law, Private Military Security Companies*); UNSCR 1325 Women Peace and Security (*Women in Diplomacy*); (*Joint session with the Permanent Council Of the OSCE*) Security and Environment.

## **Section II: Intra-State elements**

### **1. National planning and decision-making process**

#### **1.1. What is the national planning and decision-making process in determining/approving military posture and defence expenditures in your State?**

Planning and decision making process is defined by the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Law on Defence and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria. The President, the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers and other bodies are involved in this process.

The National Assembly adopts the Law of Defense and Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria, National Security Concept, National Security Strategy and the Military Doctrine, approves long term programs for the development of the Armed forces, approves the Defence budget and defines the size of the Armed Forces.

The President of the Republic is Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. One of his authorities is to endorse Armed Forces' Strategic plans.

The Council of Ministers carries out the overall leadership of the Armed Forces.

For additional information see the Military Doctrine, Military Strategy and White paper on Defence - [www.mod.bg](http://www.mod.bg)

The Defence budget is an integral part of the State budget. Each year the National Assembly adopts the State Budget Law for the next fiscal year's which is available to the public. The defence expenditures are being controlled by the Parliament and other bodies vested with power by law.

The Defence expenditures for 2023 are in accordance with the State Budget Law of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2023. The Total defence expenditures of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2023 were BGN 3 601.607 mln., which was 1,88 % of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The calculation for Defence expenditures for 2023 are based on information on the macroeconomic indicators of the Republic of Bulgaria from the Autumn Macroeconomic Forecast of the Ministry of Finance from October 2023 for the GDP real growth.

Defence expenditures for 2022 are allocated by appropriations as follows:

- ✓ Personnel - BGN 1 913.77 mln., which is 53,14 % of the total defence expenditures. The financial funds for payments of the military retirement pensions are included in the personnel figures.
- ✓ Operation and Maintenance – BGN 588.450 mln., which is 16.34 % of the total defence expenditures.
- ✓ Procurement and Construction – BGN 1 082.786 mln. from MoD and central budget, which is 30,06 % of the total defence expenditures.
- ✓ Research and Development – BGN 16.602 mln. or 0,46 % of the total defence expenditures.

Defence expenditures for 2024 are in accordance with the State Budget Law of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2024. The Total defence expenditures of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2024 are BGN 4 216, 948 mln., which is 2,05 % of the GDP.

Defence expenditures for 2023 are allocated by appropriations as follows:

- ✓ Personnel - BGN 2 175.542 mln., which is 51,59 % of the total defence expenditures. The financial funds for payments of the military retirement pensions are included in the personnel figures.
- ✓ Operation and Maintenance – BGN 651.058 mln., which is 15.44 % of the total defence expenditures.
- ✓ Procurement and Construction – BGN 1 372.821 mln. from MoD and central budget, which is 32,5 % of the total defence expenditures.
- ✓ Research and Development – BGN 17.526 mln. or 0,42 % of the total defence expenditures.

## **2. Existing structures and procedures**

### **2.1 Constitutionally established procedures for ensuring democratic political control of military, paramilitary and internal security forces, intelligence services and the police.**

#### **Military:**

The principle of democratic control over the Armed Forces in the Republic of Bulgaria as one of the fundamental principles of building a democratic society, is stipulated in the 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, through division of powers of the ruling bodies - the National Assembly, the President, the Council of Ministers, the Minister of Defence, the Constitutional Court and the legislative power.

The National Assembly adopted a Law on Defense and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria (promulgated in SG/iss. 35, in effect as of May 12<sup>th</sup> 2009). The Law was further amended and modified. It regulates the public relationships concerning the defence of the state, the defence and Armed Forces leadership, the structure and management of the Ministry of Defence, the statute of the military and civilian employees in its structures. The Law introduces a new structure of the Ministry of Defence, called “an integrated model” to ensure the defence of the state and to provide leadership and command of the Armed Forces in peacetime. In peacetime the Armed Forces cannot be given tasks of internal political character.

The Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria Reserves Act (promulgated, State Gazette No. 20/9.03.2012, effective 10.06.2012) governs the preparation of the citizenry for defense of the homeland and the public relations pertinent to the governance, staffing, training, use, military roster and service in the Reserve of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria. This Law is further



amended and modified. Military units of the Armed Forces and the structures from other forces of the national security system of the Republic of Bulgaria may be complemented in time of war with mobilization reservists and mobilization equipment. Mobilization reservists are persons enlisted in the roster for military service who have not concluded a volunteer reserve service contract and satisfy respective conditions. Mobilization reservists shall be mobilized for duty by the enlistment authorities by means of a draft order addressed to them.

### **Police:**

The structure and functions of the Bulgarian Police are regulated by the Act for the Ministry of Interior and the Regulation for the Structure and Functioning of the Ministry of Interior. Under the Act for the Ministry of Interior the activities of the Police are aimed at protecting the rights and freedoms of the citizens, as well as safeguarding the national security and public order.

## **2.2. How is the fulfillment of these procedures ensured, and which constitutionally established authorities/institutions are responsible for exercising these procedures?**

The basic provisions are as follow:

- The National Assembly decides on programs or investment projects for acquisition or modernization of weapons and equipments when the value exceeds 100 million BGN;
- The Council of Ministers adopts the National Defence Strategy, endorses Plan for Development of the Armed Forces and decides on programs or investment projects for acquisition or modernization of weapons and equipment when the value is between 50 and 100 million BGN;
- The Minister of Defence approves programs or investment projects for acquisition or modernization of weapons and equipment when the value does not exceed 50 million BGN;
- The position of Permanent Secretary of Defence is the highest rank civil servant in the MoD. The Permanent Secretary of Defence assists the Minister of Defence in the formulation and execution of defence policy and management of human, material and financial resources. He/she is appointed by the Minister of Defence after selection and in coordination with the Prime Minister for a period of four years. The Permanent Secretary of Defence's responsibilities are related to drawing up and actualization of the normative basis which regulates the structure and functioning of the MoD, defence planning, programming and budgeting, control of the execution of the budget, planning and control of projects for supplies and services necessary for the build-up of the planned defence capabilities, international military cooperation, qualification and career development of the civil servants, interaction with NGO's and syndicates.

The authority of the National Assembly (the Parliament) involves the following group of issues according to which it shall:

- Resolve on the declaration of war and conclusion of peace;
- On a motion from the President or the Council of Ministers, introduces martial law or a state of emergency on all or part of the country's territory;
- Approve the deployment of foreign troops on the territory of the country or their crossing of that territory;
- Ratify or denounce by a law all international instruments of military nature;
- Adopt the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria on a motion from the Council of Ministers;
- Determine the size of the Armed Forces and adopt programs for their development on a motion from the Council of Ministers;

- Establish the funds from the State Budget required for the defense of the country and for the deployment of Bulgarian troops in missions and operations outside the country's borders;
- Open, transform, rename and close military academies and post-secondary military educational institutions, as well as branches and departments within them where regulated jobs training and education is performed;
- Execute parliamentary control over executive authority bodies which function in the field of defence.

### **The President of the Republic of Bulgaria**

The President of the Republic as Head of state, interacting with the other state bodies, executes his powers for the establishment of stable security environment and the development of the Republic of Bulgaria as a democratic state. The President shall preside over the Consultative National Security Council and is the Supreme Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria both in peace- and wartime.

The President executes his powers on a motion from the Council of Ministers through which he:

- Shall endorse the Armed Forces Strategic Action Plans;
- Shall alert the Armed Forces or part of them to a higher level of combat and operational readiness;
- Shall proclaim general or partial mobilization;
- Shall appoint and dismiss the higher command of the Armed Forces and shall bestow all higher military ranks.

In case of military conflict or war, the President:

- Shall proclaim a state of war in the case of an armed attack against Bulgaria or whether urgent actions are required by virtue of an international commitment, or shall proclaim martial law or any other state of emergency whenever the National Assembly is not in session; the National Assembly shall then be immediately convened to endorse the decision;
- Coordinates foreign policy efforts for participation in international security organizations and structures aiming at military conflicts resolving or war-ending settlements;
- Presides the Supreme Command, issues decrees on the preparation of the country and the Armed Forces for war and combat actions;
- Organizes the implementation of wartime plans on a motion from the Council of Ministers;
- Introduces restrictive measures on information concerning the defense of the country;
- Proposes motions to the National Assembly for the conclusion of peace.

### **The Council of Ministers**

The Council of Ministers performs the general leadership of defence and the Armed Forces assisted by a Security Council, and:

- Controls and implements the state policy in the area of defence;
- Elaborates and submits to the National Assembly the Draft National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Adopts the National Defence Strategy;
- Controls and coordinates the defence planning of the country;

- Proposes a motion to the National Assembly on the size of the Armed Forces and the adoption of the country's Armed Forces development;
- Adopts a plan for the development of the Armed Forces;
- Adopts the Armed Forces Strategic Action Plans and submits them for endorsement to the President of the Republic;
- Adopts the Draft Wartime Budget on a motion by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Defense, submits it for approval to the National Assembly and organizes its implementation;
- Adopts, on a motion from the Minister of Defence, a State Wartime Plan for the provision and management of the defence civilian resources other than the resources and means stipulated in the Armed Forces Plans and organizes its implementation;
- Adopts programs for the establishment and equipment on the territory of the country of facilities and zones for defence purposes and assigns the control over their implementation to the Minister of Defense;
- Adopts programs for the armament and re-armament of the Armed Forces and for the establishment and development of the defence technological industrial base;
- Adopts Strategy for the development of the defence technological base;
- Controls the preparedness of the population, the economy, wartime reserves and the defence infrastructure of the country;
- Proposes to the President of the Republic the introduction of a higher alert level of combat and operational readiness as well as the proclamation of general or partial mobilization;
- Adopts, on a motion from the Minister of Defence, decisions on the execution of a Strategic Defence Review and/or periodic Strategic Reviews;
- Adopts mobilization plans and performs the general leadership of the Armed Forces mobilization and the transition of the country from peacetime to a state of war;
- Determines the normative terms and conditions for the establishment, storage and utilization of wartime reserves and other wartime raw materials and specifies the requirements to the transport, energy, information and warehouse systems, urban areas and industrial facilities in accordance with the needs of defence;
- Establishes, transforms and closes departments, branches and institutes to the military academies and post-secondary military schools on a motion from the Minister of Defence;
- Within the total size of the Armed Forces, endorses the number of the military by military ranks with the exception of higher officer ranks;
- Proposes a motion to the President of the Republic for the appointment and dismissal of the higher command of the Armed Forces and for promotion into higher military ranks;
- Approves and permits the deployment of foreign and allied troops on the territory of the country or their crossing of that territory in cases stipulated in a special law;
- Approves the implementation of projects on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria which are wholly or partially financed by NATO defence investments program;
- Assigns wartime tasks on the defence of the country to state bodies, the bodies of local self-government, local administration and legal entities.

## **The Minister of Defence**

A special point in the Law is dedicated to the normative regulation of the functions and authority of the Minister of Defence as a specialized body of the executive authorities for the shaping and implementation of the state policy in the field of defence. In execution of his/her main duties the Minister of Defence:

- Controls defence planning;
- Elaborates the Draft Budget of the Ministry and controls its implementation;
- Controls the activities on information provision to the interest of defence;
- Approves the participation of military units in disaster relief operations on the basis of submitted request by the relative state body in compliance with the plans for the conduct of rescue operations and urgent emergency and reconstruction activities;
- Controls the standardization, codification and certification of defense and specialized products for the needs of the Armed Forces in compliance with the NATO and EU Standardization Agreements, to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a Party;
- Endorses Military Doctrines and the operational plans of the Armed Forces on a motion from the Chief of Defence;
- Appoints and recalls representatives of the Ministry to international organizations, the defence attachés and the employees of their offices and controls their activities;
- Executes the general oversight of military education and research and development activities;
- Coordinates, on a motion from the Minister of Transport, the rules and regulations of the work of the Unified civil-military air traffic control system for air space monitoring; together with the Minister of Transport oversees and controls the use of the territorial sea of the Republic of Bulgaria and the internal waters for military purposes;
- Elaborates a list of the military airfields which can accept foreign military aircraft, and together with the Minister of Transport, elaborates a list of the military airfields which can be determined as reserve airfields for Bulgarian civil aircraft performing international and domestic public transport services;
- Controls the activities referring to the provision of aviation safety and airworthiness of military aircraft and issues the ordinance on the terms and conditions for the implementation of this activity;
- Determines the rules and regulations for aircraft accident investigations with Bulgarian military aircraft as well as of foreign military aircraft on the territory of the country;
- Determines the number of the military formations within the frame of the determined in the plan number under Article 60f (from the Republic of Bulgaria Defence and Armed Forces Act) of the structures of the Bulgarian Army and the other structures of the Armed Forces pursuant to Article 50, Paragraph 1;
- exercise other powers entrusted on him/her by law.

In addition to the above autonomous powers, the Minister of Defence has a number of other competences which he carries out upon motion from the Chief of Defence, and which pertain to the use of weapons, ordnance and combat vehicles by Bulgarian military formations. The Minister gives permission for such use in the following cases:

1. Seizure of a Bulgarian and/or Allied combat vehicle within the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria with the aim of committing a terrorist or other act that may have dangerous consequences for the population and/or the sovereignty of the country;

2. Intrusion into territorial airspace or breaking airspace regulations regarding flights over the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria conducted by a foreign aerial vehicle flying in a way bringing about suspicions that it might be used as a weapon for terrorist activities;

3. Intrusion into the internal sea waters and territorial sea of the Republic of Bulgaria conducted by a foreign ship or other vessel refusing to stop or objecting, or resorting to violent means to prevent its arrest;

4. Threat of terrorist activities or danger of potential use of weapons of mass destruction within the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria.

In the above cases, the Minister of Defence shall be obligated to immediately notify the Prime Minister and the President of the action taken. The Allies and EU Member States will be subsequently notified if the threat of terrorist activities or the danger of potential use of weapons of mass destruction can put them at risk as well.

In addition to the above, the Minister of Defence also proposes motions or drafts of the following:

18. National Military Strategy

19. Plan for the Organizational Build-Up and Development of the Armed Forces and Their Strength;

20. State Wartime Plan

21. Armed Forces Strategic Action Plans

22. Motions on alerting the Armed Forces or part thereof to a higher level of combat readiness and/or proclaiming general or partial mobilization;

23. Motions on ministerial positions, requiring higher officer ranks, motions on appointment and dismissal of the higher command of the Armed Forces and bestowal of higher military ranks to officers at the Ministry;

24. Conducting Strategic and/or Periodic Defence Reviews;

25. Armed Forces Armament and Rearmament Programs and together with the Ministers of Economy and Energy, Draft Programs on the Build-Up and Development of Defense Technological and Industrial Base;

26. Strength of regular and mobilization reserves;

27. Draft projects for the establishment, development and maintenance of an Integrated Communication and Information System for command and control of the state and the armed forces in a state of emergency, martial law, or in a state of war.

A Defence Council is established under the Minister of Defence as a joint advisory body consisting of Deputy Ministers of Defence, Chief of the Political Cabinet, the Chief of Defence and his deputies; the Permanent Secretary of Defence; the Commander of the Joint Operational Command; the Chiefs of Army, Air Force, and Navy as well as other members as appointed by the Minister of Defence.

### **Chief of Defence**

The Chief of Defence is the highest military position; the CHOD is immediate superior to the personnel of the Bulgarian Armed Forces. The Chief of Defence shall exercise his powers directly or through the Commanders of the Joint Forces Command, the Armed Forces services, the

Joint Forces Command of the Special Operations, the Logistic Support Command and the Communication Informative Support and Cyber Defense Command in conformity with the Constitution, the laws, the statutes of the Armed Forces and the orders of the Minister of Defence.

The Chief of Defence is appointed by the President of the Republic on a motion from the Council of Ministers for a four-year term of office.

The Chief of Defence is subordinate to the President of the Republic when executing his powers as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Force and is immediate subordinate to the Minister of Defence.

The Chief of Defence directly guides and is responsible for:

1. The definition of the required defence capabilities;
2. The planning and use of the armed forces;
3. The coordination and interaction with the armed authorities of NATO and EU;
4. Preparing of ministerial orders for use of formations of the Bulgarian Army and proposals for placing of the Armed Forces or a part of them in advanced readiness;
5. Proposals to the Minister of Defence for declaration of general or partial mobilization;
6. Preparing of rules and procedures for use of arms and equipment;
7. Preparing of National Defence Strategy and Strategic Action Plans for the Armed Forces;
8. Entering into and discarding from service of weapons and equipment;
9. Preparing of doctrines, conceptions for conduct of operations and standards for training and use of forces;
10. The battle readiness and operational capabilities of the Bulgarian Army;
11. Developing of the manuals of the Armed Forces;
10. The functioning of the Staff of Defence.

The main task of the Armed Forces is to guarantee the sovereignty and independence of the country and to protect its territorial integrity. In peacetime, no tasks related to the national policy can be assigned to them.

### **The Minister of Interior**

The Minister of Interior is accountable to the Council of Ministers, which is guided by the Constitution and laws in the implementation of the internal and foreign policy of the country.

## **2.3 What are the roles and missions of military, paramilitary and security forces, and how does your State control that such forces act solely within the constitutional framework?**

### **Military:**

In compliance with Article 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Armed Forces guarantee the sovereignty, security and independence of the country and protect its territorial integrity. This idea is further developed in the Law on Defence and Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria.

With the adoption of the Law on The State Agency "National Security" the Security Service of the Ministry of defence was renamed into Military Police Service with main responsibility of protecting the law and public order and discipline as well as conducting investigations and preventing any criminal activity within the Armed forces and the structures of Ministry of defence.

The military counterintelligence since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008 is responsibility of the State Agency "National Security".

In March 2011 a new draft Law on Military Police was submitted to the Parliament. This law provides for the activities and authorities of the Military police and its interaction with other state bodies and organizations. Among the principles guiding the activity of the Military Police Service are: consistency with the Constitution, Laws and International Treaties, guarantee of the rights and freedoms of the citizens and their dignity, execution of civilian control over the Military Police Service' activities, etc.

In November 2015 a new draft Law on Military Intelligence was submitted to the Parliament. This law regulates the organization, activities, tasks and functioning of military intelligence, and the status of its employees. Military Intelligence is based on the following principles: compliance with the Constitution, laws and international treaties to which Bulgaria is a part; respect the rights and freedoms of citizens and their dignity; interaction with public authorities, security services and public order; centralized management and control of intelligence; observance of political neutrality; objectivity and impartiality.

### **Ministry of Interior**

#### **The main tasks of the Ministry of Interior include:**

1. Protection of public order.
2. Protection of the rights and freedoms of the citizens and protection of their life, health and property.
3. Providing investigation of crimes.
4. Border control and guarding the state border.
5. Protection of the national security and protection from terrorism, together with the State Agency for National Security.

The main activities of the Ministry of Interior for fulfilling the abovementioned tasks include:

1. Collecting, analysing and assessing information, forecasting and developing strategic directions related to the national security.
2. Preventing forcible change of the constitutionally established order in the Republic of Bulgaria.
3. Countering criminality through uncovering and investigating crimes.
4. Preventive activities.
5. Protection of public order.
6. Protection of strategic and especially important sites determined by an act of the Council of Ministers.
7. Preventing acts of terrorism (together with the State Agency for National Security):
8. Developing and using special technical means and methods for preventing terrorist activities.
9. Developing and applying specific physical and chemical methods and means, and carrying out explosion-technical examination and assessment of explosives or of elements of explosive devices.

As far as the investigation of crimes is concerned, the Ministry of Interior (the police authorities) is competent for the investigation of the conventional crime, the State Agency

“National Security” investigates the organized crime and the Prosecutor’s Office investigates terrorism.

Other activities may be assigned to the Ministry of Interior only by law.

### **3. Procedures related to different forces personnel**

#### **3.1. What kind of procedures for recruitment and call-up of personnel for service in your military, paramilitary and internal security forces does your State have?**

##### **Military:**

The Law on Defence and Armed Forces introduces a contract which regulates the execution of the military service.

The servicemen shall not participate in meetings and manifestations of political parties, movements and coalitions when in uniform.

A serviceman or a civilian servant whose duties with the MoD are related to management or control, after dismissal from the occupied position, for a period of three years shall not conclude a contract, participate as a partner or shareholder, act as a manager or a member of a guiding or control organ of companies or corporations, which have been subject to his/her management or control or has been concluding contacts with them in the course of his/her last year of work with the MoD.

The same rule is valid also for a serviceman or a civilian servant who during his/her last year of work with the MoD has participated in procedures for conduct of tenders, or in procedures related to grants of funds from the EU. Such a person for a period of three years after dismissal from the occupied position shall not participate or represent other persons in such procedures before the structures of the MoD where he/she has worked.

#### **3.2 What kind of exemptions or alternatives to military service does your State have?**

In the Republic of Bulgaria there is no compulsory military service. This, as a consequence, there is no alternative military service.

#### **3.3 What are the legal and the administrative procedures to protect the rights of all forces personnel as well as conscripts?**

##### **Military:**

Our legislation envisages different means through which the rights of the servicemen are protected. The principle is that they have all the rights stemming from the Constitution and the laws, in case anything else is not envisaged in the Law on Defence and Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Dismissal of the career servicemen is subject to legal control. The disputes are considered in compliance with the conditions and the provisions of the Administrative Law and the court procedures for these cases are free of charge. When the career serviceman is disputing the lawfulness of his dismissal he can require pleading the dismissal unlawful and canceling the dismissal, bringing back to the previous job and compensation for the time during which he was unemployed because of that dismissal.

The career servicemen have the right of court protection in the following cases:

1. Providing the authorised material allowances;
2. Compensations for material and nonmaterial injuries during or because of his duties;
3. Validity of the signed contract for career military service.



The servicemen are decommissioned in the manner they have been promoted as stipulated in the manual for military service and the Armed Forces Codes, while taking away the military rank is done at court.

The reservists, when summoned because of mobilisation, as well as their families, can not be evicted from their houses, while they are in service or mobilisation. The implementation of the court decisions against them and eviction orders are postponed till the end of the duration of the service.

### **Ministry of Interior**

The activities and working conditions of the employees of the Ministry of Interior (police officers) are fully regulated by the Ministry of Interior Act. The police officers have all the rights under international and European law, which Bulgaria applies, including equality/equal treatment of genders in the police, payment for overtime work, first category of labour and early retirement, compensation and reduced working time for employees who work in harmful, hazardous, or specific conditions etc.

## **4. Implementation of other political norms, principles, decisions and international humanitarian law**

### **4.1. How does your State ensure that International Humanitarian Law and Law of War are made widely available, e.g., through military training programmes and regulations?**

The Republic of Bulgaria is party to the four Geneva Conventions. The Additional Protocols of 1977 were ratified in 1989. The Bulgarian Red Cross has issued a significant number of publications, containing the basic documents of international humanitarian law. Education in international humanitarian law is included in the curriculum of the military schools and the Military Academy. The platoon and company commanders are obliged to organize similar courses for their units on an annual basis. In addition, mission-orientated briefings are conducted prior to participation of Bulgarian contingents in Peace Support Operations (PSO). The establishment and functioning of political parties' and political movements' structures, as well as carrying out of political activities within the Armed Forces shall be forbidden.

In February 2019, a National Committee on International Humanitarian Law was established, which is a multidisciplinary and interdepartmental body with an advisory nature on international humanitarian law. The National Committee on International Humanitarian Law is chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Deputy Chairman is the Deputy Minister of Defense. An Expert Working Group at the National Committee on International Humanitarian Law has been established with the main task of reviewing and assessing the compliance of Bulgarian legislation and national measures for the implementation of international humanitarian law.

## **Section III: Public access and contact information**

### **1. Public access**

#### **1.1 How is the public informed about the provisions of the Code of Conduct?**

The Government of the Republic of Bulgaria is committed to ensuring broad public access to military information, with the exception of a limited number of issues, defined by law as classified information. A special law called Public information access act was enacted and promulgated in State Gazette number 55/2000, which further facilitates the public access to information related to the activities of the state administration.

## **Ministry of defence**

On the official web page of the Ministry of Defence is published information about the Code of Conduct, in Bulgarian language, along with other information related to documents that concern politico-military aspects of security.

On the official web page of the MoD in section “News” is published an announcing message, in Bulgarian and in English language, regarding the exchange of information on the Code of Conduct on politico-military aspects of security and the participation of the Republic of Bulgaria in this exchange.

A Public Relations and Protocol Directorate has been established at the MoD which is responsible for preparing and disseminating information to the mass media and the general public. The Minister of Defence and his deputies hold press-conferences on a regular basis. The Minister, his deputies, the Chief of Defence, his deputies and some heads of directorates in the MoD are obliged to stage a “reception day” for the general public once monthly. On such a day any individual can raise with them any public or personal issue, related to the armed forces.

We regret that in 2023 again, like in 2022, no consensus was reached for conducting the Annual Discussion on the implementation of the OSCE Code of conduct on politico-military aspects of security, because of the Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. There was a FSC Chairpersonship’s decision to address this important pillar of the first dimension in the form of a “Security Dialogue”. The current politico-military challenges underline the relevance of the commitments stipulated in this Document. All participating States have committed to the Code and it needs to be implemented in letter and spirit by all.

### **1.2 What additional information related to the Code of Conduct, e.g., replies to the Questionnaire on the Code of Conduct, is made publicly available in your State?**

The Ministry of Defence has at its disposal an official web page where the information is regularly renewed, as well as its own weekly edition – the newspaper named “Bulgarian Army”, and the Military television channel.

### **1.3 How does your State ensure public access to information related to your State’s armed forces?**

The public authorities, according to their competences, are obliged to ensure the correct information of the citizens on the activities of public interest.

According to the provisions of the Law on decisional transparency in the public administration, the Ministry of Defence has the obligation to publish the normative acts regulating its organization and functioning, financial sources, budget, programs and strategies, the list of the documents of public interest, etc.

## **2. Contact information**

National Point of Contact:

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The information provided by the Ministry of defence of the Republic of Bulgaria is collected by Legal Affairs in Defence Directorate; Public Relations and Protocol Directorate; Planning, Programming and Budget Directorate; Social Policy and Military Patriotic Education Directorate and summarized by Defence Policy and Planning Directorate.

## Section IV: Women, Peace and Security

### Voluntary information regarding implementation of the UNSCR 1325

*FSC.DEC/5/11 (Annex)*

#### **I. Prevention**

***1. Measures to increase armed forces personnel understanding of the special needs and contributions of women in conflict.***

**Inclusion of specific matters related to the protection of women's and girl's rights in the Basic education of armed forces.**

The Bulgarian (BGR) Ministry of Defence (MoD), Bulgarian Armed Forces (BGR AF) and the military educational system provide several educational and training modules which include the strategic, operational and tactical levels of knowledge. At the same time, pre-deploying training is mandatory for all military servicewomen and servicemen. The National Military University (NMU) "Vasil Levski" in Veliko Tarnovo participates actively in the Military Gender Studies (MGS) Project (Under the Erasmus+ educational program umbrella). It is a 30 months Strategic Partnership with the participation of the institutions from the four following countries: Portugal (Project Coordinator), Military Academy – Lisbon; Bulgaria – National Military University – Veliko Tarnovo; Italy – University in Torino; Romania, Land Forces Academy – Sibiu. The synergies from the countries' collaboration will ultimately provide a more diverse and dynamic perspective on gender mainstreaming in European Military Institutions. The project's main priority is to develop a Military Gender Studies model, devised specifically to be taught in Military Institutions. Namely, an MGS Army Handbook is created in order to be used at the partner institutions. This training system will ensure the promotion of the necessary social, civic, intercultural and interdisciplinary competences, improving institutional perspectives of equalitarian gender roles and establishing the groundwork that will allow for a smooth integration of Military Gender Studies into the curricular offer of the partner military academies. More support for the aims of the project is received from the PT MoD, PT National Defence Institute, Spanish MoD and Croatian RACVIAC Center for Security Cooperation. The MGS Army Handbook will be approved in partner military academies, and in the next stage will be used for training future military leaders in other European military institutions and universities. The MGS Army Handbook has been translated into Bulgarian and is about to be published and distributed in the military education system.

**Availability of specialised in-service training for armed forces personnel on the protection of women's and girl's rights and inclusion of specific matters related to the protection of women's and girl's rights in the pre-deployment training for international peacekeeping missions.**

The BGR MoD and BGR Armed Forces recognised the importance of gender impacts, especially on women, children and old people during the crisis and climate change disasters. The Crisis Management and Disaster Response Centre of Excellence (CMDR COE), located in Sofia, the Republic of Bulgaria, was established on 28 August 2013 and received official accreditation as the 21st NATO COE on 31 March 2015. The CMDR COE primary area of responsibility - crisis management and disaster response (CMDR), is coupled by a broad thematic portfolio including relevant cross-cutting topics such as resilience, climate change, protection of civilians and gender mainstreaming. Despite not being an operational body, the CMDR COE provides research and analysis, tailored education and training for senior experts (strategic and operational level), support to concept development and experimentation, doctrine and standardisation, lessons-learned. The CMDR COE has a long-standing, and continuously growing, commitment to supporting gender mainstreaming in the security and defence sector, particularly in the CMDR domain. Building and

fostering the required combined expertise in pursuit of the latter aim, the Centre has a dedicated GENAD and three certified gender trainers. Research and analysis on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and relatedly - the integration of gender perspectives in military contexts, is a continuous process which informs planning, policy elaboration, and education and training (E&T) development at the CMDR COE.

Gender mainstreaming is a critical aspect of course curriculum and is well-embedded into CMDR COE's daily business. Each CMDR COE NATO-approved course features a module on gender exploring relevance for and importance to various CMDR activities.

The CMDR COE cooperates with the European Security and Defence College (ESDC).

The CMDR COE and the NCGM (NATO Department Head) joined forces in developing an original training solution, which aims to support the establishment of a sound and functioning Gender Advisory Structure consisting of dedicated dual-hatted experts - **Gender Focal Points** (GFPs). GFPs facilitate the integration of gender perspectives within their respective chain of command and thus contribute to the institutionalisation of gender-sensitive approaches to planning and decision-making.

As of 2022 the CMDR COE offered four annual NATO Gender Focal Point course (GFP course) iterations - two resident and two online.

The global pandemic has regrettably exhibited significant shortcomings in the systematic integration of gender perspectives across the political, economic, social, and technological spheres. COVID-19 has demonstrated that structural inequalities not only continue to exist but are often institutionalised and interpreted as part of organisational or occupational culture. These findings reverberate across the WPS community and call for immediate collective actions. As a dedicated member of the said community, the CMDR COE continues to monitor developments in the field and to suggest original and innovative solutions for an environment enabling inclusive and participatory security.

BGR side continue to explore gender mainstreaming as a strategy for improving CMDR and for ensuring gender equality in the security and defence sector.

### **Availability of plans to address and gather information from local women populations in areas at risk of conflicts.**

The Council of the Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria approved the National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (WPS) 2020-2025. English green version of the BGR WPS NAP is available on the MoD official webpage:

[https://www.mod.bg/en/doc/drugi/20210408\\_NAP\\_WPS\\_AE.pdf](https://www.mod.bg/en/doc/drugi/20210408_NAP_WPS_AE.pdf)

In addition, the new 2021-2030 National Strategy for Promoting the Equality between Women and Men was adopted by the Council of the Ministers.

The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria has adopted an Action Plan for Implementation of UNSCR1325 and relevant UN resolutions. The Action Plan is in process of updating and provides mechanisms to embed the principles, laid out in UNSC Resolution 1325, within the structures of Bulgaria's MoD and Armed Forces. Listed measures and guidelines include:

- Enhancing the role of women at all levels of decision-making;
- Reviewing and updating the legislative framework regarding the military service in compliance with the European Union, NATO and national legislation in place, in order to create conditions conducive to the elimination of discrimination practices;
- Organizing and participating in joint activities raising awareness among home and foreign public about good practices and lessons learned with regard to the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325;
- Improving the gender balance in all structures of the MoD and the Armed Forces;

- Eliminating the informal restrictions for women in professional areas, academic subjects, post-graduate qualifications, educational degrees and forms of study when applying for the acquisition of Bachelor's Degree in Military Studies, with a professional qualification Military Officer;
- Taking into account the importance of stressing the gender balance when disseminating information at all levels and when participating in conferences, seminars and working meetings;
- Adapting operational work to NATO and EU standards when formulating orders for the conduct of missions and operations, focusing on: interaction with the indigenous population in the area of responsibility, cross-cultural communication, and standards of conduct;
- Ensuring gender balance in the structures participating in missions and operations, especially in components in direct contact with the indigenous population;
- Maintaining the necessary level of support for the process of implementation of UNSCR 1325, so that the Armed Forces are sufficiently provided with information on the relevant issues.

As a result of the Action Plan, restrictions for women to attend all specialties at the national military educational system have been removed. Changes in policies have made it possible for women to apply to all positions within the Armed Forces.

## II. Participation

### *1. Measures to increase the number of women in general and in decision-making positions in the armed forces and the ministry of defence.*

#### **Number and percentage of women in the military forces disaggregated by rank.**

In their work, Ministry of Defence experts use a basic principle in monitoring the implementation of the equality policies and integration of gender Perspectives, namely Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD).

	<b>Land</b>	<b>Air</b>	<b>Navy</b>	<b>JFC<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>SOF<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>MoD<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Number of OF-6 and higher (women)	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0%
Number of OF-6 and higher (men)	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100%
Number of OF-3 to OF-5 (women)	3.4	6.0	10.2	4.4	4.0	8.3	6.5%
Number of OF-3 to OF-5 (men)	96.6	94.0	89.8	95.6	96.0	91.7	93.5%
Number of OF-1 to OF-2 (women)	10.6	13.3	22.2	18.4	8.6	23.8	14.8%
Number of OF-1 to OF-2 (men)	89.4	86.7	77.8	81.6	91.4	76.2	85.2%
Number of OR-5 to OR-9 (women)	17.6	16.8	10	19.2	19.5	23.7	18,2%
Number of OR-5 to OR-9 (men)	82.4	83.2	90	80.8	80.5	76.3	81,8%
Number of OR-1 to OR-4 (women)	24.9	22.6	17.8	19.2	17.2	8.8	21,3%
Number of OR-1 to OR-4 (men)	75.1	77.4	82.2	80.8	82.8	91.2	78,7%
<b>Total (women)</b>	20.4%	17.6%	14.2%	17.2%	15.7%	14.7%	<b>17.9<sup>4</sup>%</b>
<b>Total (men)</b>	79.6%	82.4%	85.8%	82.8%	84.3%	85.3%	<b>82.1<sup>5</sup>%</b>
<i>National Armed Forces: WOMEN AND MEN ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY PERSONNEL (full-time in the armed forces)</i>							
<i>1 - Joint Force Command</i>		<i>2 - Special Operations Forces</i>			<i>3 - Ministry of Defence</i>		

#### **Number and percentage of discrimination and sexual harassment complaints that are referred, investigated and acted upon.**

Sexual harassment, sexual abuse/assault and all forms of violence are crimes under the BGR Penalty Code. The women and men are equal by law. The crimes connected to the sexual harassment and abuse fall in Chapter two of the Criminal Code – “Crimes against personality”.

The MoD and national formal procedures to report incidents of sexual offences in the national armed forces are, as follows:

Complaints by armed forces’ personnel can be directed through several channels: the chain of command, the Ministry of Defence Inspectorate, the Military Police, the National Commission for Protection against Discrimination, the Military Prosecutor or the civilian courts. The Military

Police and the Ministry of Defence gender experts both provide a 24-hour telephone hotline giving advice, support and a means through which to file a complaint.

Informal complaints can also be made through the Bulgarian Armed Forces' Women's Association. This association works with non-governmental organizations to respond to the needs of armed forces' personnel who experience sexual discrimination, harassment or abuse or domestic violence. The support services include confidential legal advice and psychological support for victims, female and male. The Bulgarian Armed Forces' Women's Association furthermore actively monitors the progress of official complaints. It sees itself as useful to the political and military leadership of the Armed forces in helping to monitor personnel issues.

### **Development of regular analysis of retention and promotion practices for men and women in the Armed forces.**

The BGR MoD established a new approach to carry out exit surveys to monitor women and men leaving the service. The process was established in 2021 and now is constant and ongoing. The summary analysis for 2023 shows 89% of those leaving the defence system are male service members and 11% are female service members. Based on the ratio of military personnel indicated above (82% men to 18% women), in the Ministry of Defence, the structures directly subordinated to the Minister of Defence and the Bulgarian Armed Forces, it follows that female military personnel are less likely to leave the defence system compared to male military personnel.

## **2. Measures to increase the number of women in peacekeeping forces.**

### **Number and percentage of women in peacekeeping forces disaggregated by rank.**

<b>ALL Operations:</b> Figures should show how many women and men have deployed on ALL Operations. ALL Operations means AU, EU, NATO, OSCE, UN Peacekeeping, Humanitarian Aid								
BGR	Gender	Land	Air	Navy	Other 1	Other 2	Other 3	Total
Number of OF-6 and higher	Women							
Number of OF-6 and higher	Men							
Number of OF-3 to OF-5	Women	1			4			5
Number of OF-3 to OF-5	Men	12	4	8	5	8	50	87
Number of OF-1 to OF-2	Women		1		2		2	5
Number of OF-1 to OF-2	Men	28	2	1	6	7	15	59
Number of OR-5 to OR-9	Women	4			11		5	20
Number of OR-5 to OR-9	Men	52	2		6	27	69	156
Number of OR-1 to OR-4	Women	9					1	10
Number of OR-1 to OR-4	Men	116	2			6	9	133
Total	Women	14	1		17		8	38
Total	Men	208	10	9	17	48	143	435

If Other, please specify one area of service/ element per box in the same order as given above	
Other 1	Ministry of Defense and Military Medical Academy
Other 2	Joint Special Operation Command
Other 3	Joint Forces Command, Logistic Support Command, Military police

### **Number and percentage of international missions where gender advisors were appointed.**

#### Gender advisors – GENADs and Gender Focal Points (GFPs)

The BGR MoD and BGR AF have 5 gender advisors (GENADs). They have received training and are certified from the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM) and they are certified by European Security and Defence College (ESDC) - the European Security Course "A Comprehensive Approach to Gender in Operations".

In total, six GENADs and GFPs have been deployed so far. One was deployed in 2016 (EUPOL, Afghanistan) and five GFPs were deployed in Georgia (EUMM).

### **III. Protection**

#### ***1. Increased access to justice for women whose rights are violated.***

It is a fact that the Bulgarian Armed Forces Women Association (BUAFWA) is the general actor of change in the defence and security sector in the country. The association is a NGO and has an agreement with the Minister of defence to contribute for the implementation of the international WPS agenda within the Ministry' of defence structures.

After several years MoD and BUAFWA's efforts Bulgaria is ready to fulfil training and educational gap with new established Gender Focal Points (GFPs) course. The result of this NATO certified course will support Bulgarian intention to build up and develop Gender Advisors (GENAD) and Gender Focal Points (GFPs) capabilities. It is one of the priorities of the project "Female Leaders in Security and Defence-FLSD". The project is developing within the framework of the South Eastern Europe Defence Ministerial Process (SEDM) and NATO's Smart Defence Initiative.

FLSD project general aim is to emphasise the improvement of capabilities by using all human potential and integrating gender perspectives in the strategic, operational and tactical planning processes, capabilities development and force preparedness with a view to reinforcing and enhancing the strategic and operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces and security systems.

### **IV. Other information**

#### **1. Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda**

In 2023, Bulgaria released its mid-term report for the implementation of the National Action Plan of Bulgaria for Women, Peace and Security (WPS) for the period 2020-2025. The review covers the period from the adoption of the plan in 2020 throughout the next two-year of its implementation (2020-2022). It aims to make a preliminary assessment of some of the achievements and to highlight areas where additional efforts are needed for the fulfilment of the strategic goals set in the Plan. The structure of the review follows that of the National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS. Taking the Review's conclusions into consideration, Bulgaria will examine the possibilities for continuing the state policy on the implementation of the WPS agenda.

While the analysis of the review focuses on the indicators laid down for the 2020-2022 period, there are also some that cover the entire five-year duration of the WPS NAP. Notable progress is being made in the areas of protection and prioritisation. The number and capacity of national crisis centers is increasing each year. There are 24/7 hotlines of the Bulgarian Armed Forces, which provide advice and support on making a formal complaint. Moreover, the Ministry of Defense provides special protection and support for Ukrainian refugees, the majority of whom are women and children. Ukrainian citizens are accommodated in recreational bases of the Bulgarian Armed Forces.

Bulgaria regularly participates in international fora discussions, events and seminars. Each year, NATO's Crisis Management and Disaster Response Centre of Excellence in Sofia offers four editions of the NATO Points of Contact on Equality Course – two in person and two online. Additionally, Bulgarian institutions organise specialised trainings for professionals (*judges, prosecutors and police officers*) to improve expert capacity on the topics of equality, prevention of violence, and human trafficking. Based on the presented data and the captured snapshot of the



progress in the country, recommendations were provided in three areas. The first include the prioritisation of policies on the equality between women and men and the building of strategic partnerships. The second concerns public awareness and the third relates to the collection and aggregation of data and its publicity.

Additionally, Bulgaria contributes on yearly basis to the annual UNSG's thematic report on WPS, taking note of the recommendations provided for the previous year regarding the implementation of the Agenda. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also participates actively in regional and multilateral initiatives under the WPS Agenda. For instance, Bulgaria is a member of the UN Group of Friends of WPS and delivers statements in the Open Debates of the UN Security Council on this topic of key importance.

As a member of the EU task force on WPS and the WPS Focal Points Network (WPSFPN) and Commitment 2025, the country participates not only in regular and extraordinary meetings, while also taking part in various side-events, organised by other member states. In accordance to the implementation of the National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality 2021-2030, the Diplomatic Institute to the Minister of Foreign Affairs organises trainings of young diplomats on the issues of gender equality in public affairs and meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

## **2. Improving the balance between women and men at all levels of decision-making**

Both experts nominated by Bulgaria and currently members of the UN Treaty Bodies system are women: Ms. Velina Todorova, who serves her second term in the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2021-2025) and Ms. Genoveva Tisheva, who was elected for a second term as member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in early 2022. Thus, Bulgaria contributes to the achievement of gender equality in the international fora.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also collects data disaggregated by sex, which is used to monitor the implementation on a national scale of the UN Sustainable Development Goal regarding gender equality and the empowerment of all women. For instance, the consistent monitoring of the gender balance ratio within the Ministry helps to identify gaps and adapt the work environment accordingly. In 2022, the total number of women at leadership position at the MFA is 61 (out of 139), making the percentage of women holding senior positions close to 44%. In the 2022 Global Gender Gap Report, the World Economic Forum ranked Bulgaria 42 among the 146 countries surveyed.

## Section V: Children and armed conflict

### Voluntary information on children and armed conflict

*FSC.DEL/421/23 16 (Annex)*

#### A. International legal framework and commitments

1. Please indicate if your State is a party to or has endorsed the following international legal instruments or voluntary commitments. Please also kindly elaborate in case of any reservations or interpretative statements.

	YES	NO	Reservations/ Interpretative
Convention on the Rights of the Child	YES		
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	YES		
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the rights of the child on the involvement of children in armed conflict	YES		
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the rights of the child on a communication procedure		NO	
ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour	YES		
Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction	YES		
Safe Schools Declaration	YES		
Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups	YES		
Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers	YES		
Political Declaration on EWIPA (Explosive Weapons in Populated	YES		

#### B. National measures to end and prevent CAAC violations

1. What is the minimum legal age for recruitment (including voluntary recruitment) for service in military, paramilitary and security forces in your State?

*The minimum legal age for recruitment (including voluntary recruitment) for service in military forces in the Republic of Bulgaria is 18 years of age for voluntary military service. The conscription ended in 2007. In 2020, Bulgaria announced a program to allow every citizen up to the age of 40 to join the armed forces for 6 months of military service in the voluntary reserve.*

2. If the legal age for recruitment is set below 18 years, what measures are taken to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, with particular regard to the obligation that children do not directly participate in hostilities and are not subject to mandatory recruitment?

*Not applicable, the minimum legal age for recruitment is 18 years.*

3. Please indicate if your State has any national reference document (for example in the form of laws, regulations, policies or action plans) on issues related to the protection of children in armed conflicts.

*The Republic of Bulgaria does not have any national reference document on issues related to the protection of children in armed conflicts.*

4. Do the military doctrine and guidance of your State include issues related to children and armed conflict, with particular regard to the six grave violations identified by the UN Security Council: recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, abduction, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, attacks on schools and hospitals and military use of schools and hospitals, denial of humanitarian access to children?

*No, the military doctrine of the Republic of Bulgaria does not include issues specifically related to children and armed conflict, with particular regard to the six grave violations identified by the UN Security Council. Being a responsible member of the EU and NATO the Republic of Bulgaria adheres to the international humanitarian law, including these specific topics.*

**C. Education and training activities for troops on CAAC issues**

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**D. International partnerships**

1. In case of collaboration and training programmes of your State with other States, to what extent are issues related to children and armed conflict addressed and included in such programmes, in particular for those countries that are mentioned in the UN Secretary General annual report on children and armed conflict?
2. Does your State support capacity-building initiatives in the security and other sectors of other States, in particular those in conflict or post-conflict situations, which include the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and respect of international humanitarian law? If yes, to what extent are issues related to children and armed conflict addressed in these initiatives?
3. Please add any relevant information or comments with the view of sharing/identifying best practices.

Bulgaria acknowledges the link between the WPS Agenda and the YPS Agenda. To this end the country supports the joint statements of the UN Group of Friends of children and armed conflict. In February 2024, Bulgaria became co-signatory of a Joint Letter on forcible transfers and deportations of Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict United Nations, Ms. Virginia Gamba.