**CONTRIBUTION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BULGARIA TO THE REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ON HUMAN RIGHTS ON “THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION AND ACHIEVEMENT OF THE HEALTH-RELATED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS”**

The government of the Republic of Bulgaria would like to convey the following information on the national achievements and challenges in relation to the health-related goals of Agenda 2030:

**Goal 3**

**Target 3.1**

Maternal mortality ratio was 3.1% in 2016, lower than the EU average which was 4.72%. It should be noted that a qualified healthy staff attended 94.5% of the births.

**Target 3.2**

In the recent years there has been a lasting tendency of reduction of child mortality as the level reached in 2016 was the lowest in the whole history of Bulgaria’s demographic statistics. Child mortality ratio dropped from 13.3% in 2000 down to 6.5% in 2016. Favourable tendencies are observed regarding the age indicators of child mortality (perinatal, neonatal and postnatal) which also go down:

* perinatal mortality drops at a slow rate from 12.2% in 2000 to 9.8% in 2016;
* neonatal mortality shows a clear downward tendency: from 7.5% in 2000 to 3.9% in 2016;
* the postnatal mortality dropped from 5.9% in 2000 to 2.6%;
* the stillborn rate dropped slightly – from 7.5% in 2000 to 7.1% in 2016.

Regarding the cause of death of children up to the age of 1 year, mortality due to certain conditions having occurred in the perinatal period, inborn anomalies, deformities and chromosome aberrations, diseases of the bodies of blood circulation and the respiratory system are most common. In this context, statutory changes have been prepared so that in case of couples with monogenic genetic diseases or confirmed balance chromosome mutation of at least one of the partners, these could benefit from the financing of fertilization procedures involving assisted reproduction methods, so that the gametes would not be bearers of the certified genetic or chromosome defect.

According to data of the National Statistical Institute of 2017, the probability of death occurring in the 1-4 years age group is 0.001208.

**Target 3.3**

On combating hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases:

In accordance with the provisions of Article 15 of the Health Act, surveillance of communicable diseases is carried out on the country’s territory within state health control. Diseases, subject to mandatory registration, communication and reporting, are over 60, including viral hepatitis A, B, C and D, water-borne diseases (salmonellosis, dysentery escherichiosis, cholera, abdominal typhus, legionellosis, giardiasis, cryptosporidiosis, etc.), infections related to medical services and caused by waterborne microorganisms. At regional level, the activities related to risk assessment, determining the volume of counter-epidemic measures regarding the patient, the contact persons, and the population exposed to an infection risk, are set by the regional health inspectorates. At national level, the management of the communicable diseases surveillance activities is entrusted with the Ministry of Health and the National Centre of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, in its capacity as methodological consultant and expert authority. In accordance with Ordinance No. 21 of 2005 on the procedure for registration, communication and reporting of communicable diseases, every case is communicated within 24 hours by the physician having detected the disease to the Regional Health Inspectorate and the necessary measures are duly taken.

Being an EU Member State, Bulgaria has transposed and has been applying fully the EU legislation in the field of drinking water quality. The implementation of this legislation largely ensures the attainment of the goals set forth by the adopted Resolution on the human right to clean and safe drinking water.

**Target 3.4**

The demographic forecasts show that due to the objective processes of aging, the general mortality ratio in the country will remain high and unchanged at least until 2030. The standardized mortality ratio in Bulgaria is 883.86% as there is an express downward tendency. The causes of death have remained the same, as diseases of the bodies of blood circulation, new formations, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases, are prevailing.

The premature death indicator keeps its level of the past five years and stood at 21.8% in 2016. Premature mortality with men (28.7%) is double the one with women (14.2%).

Information on the implementation of the National Programme on Chronic Non-communicable Diseases should be presented by the Promotion and Prophylaxis of Diseases and Dependencies Directorate and/or the Health Control Directorate.

**Target 3.7**

The Ministry of Health launched a National Programme on Improving Maternity and Child Health 2014-2020 through which health services with a considerable health effect, including early diagnosis and complex treatment of certain diseases, are provided. These services are not financed from other sources. The medical activities financed by the state outside the scope of the health insurance are oriented towards prevention, prophylaxis, early diagnostics and treatment of pregnant, young mothers with pathological pregnancy, children with disabilities and chronic diseases and prematurely born children.

Another priority of the Ministry of Health is provision of the operation of the Fund for the Treatment of Children which assists financially and organizationally children needing specific diagnostic and treatment procedures abroad as well as a Centre for Assisted Reproduction which ensures treatment of sterility through in-vitro fertilization.

Projects in the field of reproductive health and child healthcare are also implemented in the recent years with the financial support of the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area (EEA) and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

**Target 3.8**

In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, citizens have the right to medical insurance guaranteeing them affordable medical care, and to free medical care in accordance with conditions and procedures established by law.

Protection of citizens' health as a condition of full physical, mental, and social well-being is set forth as a national priority under the Health Act. It is guaranteed by the state through the principle of equality upon the use of health services, the provision of accessible and high-quality healthcare, promotion of health and integrated prophylaxis of diseases, prevention and reduction of the risk for the citizens' health, as a result of the adverse effect of the factors of the living environment. By the provisions of the law the state also ensures specific health protection for children, pregnant women, mothers of children up to the age of one year and persons with physical and mental disorders.

Regarding the vaccine section: vaccines are mandatory; targeted immunization and re-immunization are provided by the Ministry of Health, and financed under the national budget. The vaccines are free for every Bulgarian citizen subject to immunization in accordance with the National Immunization Calendar. The migration of children and their parents outside the country is a main problem to reaching and exceeding the 95 per cent immunization coverage. Since they still feature on general practitioners' lists as serviced population, the reported percentage of immunizations is unrealistic. The access of the Roma population to a GP for immunization is another challenge due to the frequent internal migration of that population ad visits to the doctor only in case of illness.

**Target 3.9**

Being an EU Member State, Bulgaria has transposed and fully applies the relevant European legislation.

**Target 3.c**

The human resources in the healthcare sector in Bulgaria are faced with the same challenges as the other European countries – aging population and, respectively, aging workforce in the health sector, inadequate attractiveness of certain health professions for the young generations, uneven territorial distribution as a result of the internal migration from the smaller to the bigger population centres, migration of health workers within the EU and outside it.

Irrespective of the pointed challenges, the provision of physicians per 100,000 people in Bulgaria is traditionally high. In 2015, Bulgaria ranked sixth in terms of the provision of physicians among the Member States of the EU, the European Economic Area and Switzerland. For the past 10 years, there has been a sustainable tendency of strengthening the provision of physicians in the country.

Compared to the EU Member States, the provision of nurses in Bulgaria is low. In 2015, of 25 Member States having submitted data to Eurostat, Bulgaria was last but one with 437.41 nurses per 100,000 people.

There has been a clear tendency of reduction of the number of medics willing to work abroad for the past 10 years. In 2016, certificates for work abroad were issued to less than 1% of the physicians in Bulgaria.

The Ministry of Health attaches priority to the creation of possibilities for career development of medical specialists. The legal framework regulating the specialization of medical workers has changed in the recent years in order to respond to the need of a better functioning system for enhancing the professional qualification.

**Goal 4**

In the 2014-2015 period, the Ministry of Health developed a package of strategic documents that aimed to reflect the vision and the specific measures for the healthcare system by 2020. They are based on an analysis of the indicators for the health of the Bulgarian citizens and the main challenges to the functioning of the system in the conditions of growing health risks related to the lifestyle and the environmental factors, the aging population and the inflow of new health technologies.

In 2015, the National Assembly adopted a National Health Strategy 2020. The formulated national health goals involve reduction of the mortality rate in the separate age groups (for children aged of 0-1 - to 6.8 per 1,000 live births; for children aged 1-9 – to 0.24 per 1,000; for adolescents and young people aged 10-19 – to 0.28 per 1,000; for persons in the economically active groups from 20 to 65 years of age – to 4.19 per 1,000) as well as an increase of the mean duration of the life of people over the age of 65. An Action Plan has been developed with the strategy to assist its implementation as specific measures, deadlines, contractors and financial resources including financing from European funds and programmes, are set forth for each policy.

The National Health Strategy 2020 covers the full set of policies for achieving the national health goals set while creating conditions for attaining the country's common sustainable development goals envisaged in the Bulgaria 2020 National Programme for Development and the other national strategic and programme documents. It is based on the understanding for intersectoral cooperation and integration of the health policies in all spheres of the social and economic life for achieving the anticipated results for protection and improving of national health.

The strategy reflects the view that health is an irrevocable human right and a condition of full physical, mental and social well-being and not only the absence of a disease or disability. The good health is an asset and a source of economic and social stability, has a decisive importance for reducing poverty and, at the same time, contributes to the sustainable development and uses it. Health protection and recovery and enhancing the quality of life of every Bulgarian citizen are a main function and care of the state. It should be taken into account, however, that health is not only a constitutionally guaranteed right of every citizen but also an obligation and a responsibility of everyone involving compliance with the law and maintaining of a healthy lifestyle.

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***Sofia***