




# Weekly Briefing

**Bulgaria external relations briefing:**  
**Bulgaria at the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly**  
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## **Bulgaria at the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly**

### **Summary**

*The 77th Session of the UN General Assembly began in New York on September 13, and the main political debate was between September 20 and 26. It is the first Session of the UNGA to be held in person on a full scale since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The main topics were solutions that bind the current global crises - the recovery after COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and the global food crisis caused by Russian aggression, the threats to the global economy and the already irreversible climate problems. A Bulgarian government delegation led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikolay Milkov took part in the session. Minister Milkov took part in a number of meetings. Among them were a meeting on transforming education, with a video address from the Bulgarian president, a meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals, an informal meeting of foreign ministers on the consequences of the war in Ukraine, an urgent meeting of foreign ministers after the statements of the Russian president and the announced referendums, a meeting of the so-called "Bucharest Nine", as well as a number of bilateral meetings.*

The 77th session of the UN General Assembly opened on September 19, in New York. It is the first to be held in person on a full scale since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In his opening remarks, Secretary-General António Guterres said that the world is facing grave dangers, and the advancement of peace, human rights and sustainable development face various challenges such as armed conflict, climate change, poverty, inequality, hunger, division and mistrust. The high-level General Debate started on September 20 and concluded on September 26, after representatives of 190 member states spoke around the theme of "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges."<sup>1</sup>

On September 20, a Bulgarian government delegation, led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikolay Milkov went to New York to participate in the 77th session of the UN General Assembly.

At the very beginning Bulgarian delegation took part in the **Summit on Transforming Education**, as well as in a meeting dedicated to the urgent implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals**. Together with this Bulgarian first diplomat took also part in an **informal meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs of the EU** member states. The main focus in it was

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/goal-month-september-2022>

placed on the global consequences of the war in Ukraine, including high energy and food prices. Minister Milkov participated also in a Ministerial meeting of the UN Security Council and had a number of bilateral meetings with his colleagues.

During the first day of his stay in New York Bulgarian Foreign Minister participated also in a **meeting of foreign ministers of the B9** countries (nine NATO member states: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic), hosted by the USA. It discussed global threats to Euro-Atlantic security, strengthening the Alliance's deterrence and defense in response to Russian military aggression against Ukraine, deepening of the transatlantic dialogue and the growing challenges from China.<sup>2</sup>

Minister Milkov held a number of planned bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. He held a conversation with Karen Donfried, US Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia, with whom they discussed bilateral relations and the prospects for deepening the strategic dialogue between Bulgaria and the US.

There was also a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu. The two agreed that in the current geopolitical context, closer cooperation in the fields of energy and security is necessary.

Regional cooperation, bilateral relations and the European perspective of Kosovo and the Western Balkans were the focus of the meeting between the first Bulgarian diplomat and his counterpart from Pristina, Donika Gervala.<sup>3</sup>

On September 22, the head of the Bulgarian delegation, took part in a **Ministerial meeting of the UN Security Council**. It was dedicated to the search for responsibility for violations of international humanitarian law in Ukraine. The latest developments from the war in Ukraine, Russian violations of international humanitarian law and the need to punish the guilty in order to prevent similar crimes and violence in the future were discussed.<sup>4</sup>

On the same day, an informal meeting of the foreign ministers of the member states of the **Central European Initiative (CEI)** took place in New York, hosted by Minister Nikolay Milkov in his capacity as the Chairman of the Initiative. Bulgaria chairs CEI for the period January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022.<sup>5</sup>

In his speech, Minister Milkov highlighted the important role of CEI in supporting the European integration of the region and for adequate assistance in crises. As an example, he pointed to CEI's well-established mechanism for multilateral dialogue and effective decision-

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mfa.bg/bg/news/35080>

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mfa.bg/bg/news/35110>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.mfa.bg/bg/news/35108>

making. In the context of recent events, the Initiative responded adequately and promptly to condemn the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, which is a full member of the Initiative. CEI also provides political, humanitarian and financial support to Ukraine, including for hospitals and schools.

On September 23 the head of Bulgarian delegation took part in an informal ministerial meeting of the **South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP)**. During the meeting, Minister Milkov emphasized the key role of SEECP and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) as powerful tools for achieving security, stability and prosperity in the region. He pointed out that regional cooperation in Southeast Europe is a leading priority for Bulgarian foreign policy. The application of European values, principles and good neighborliness are at the basis of all decisions for more efficient and effective cooperation.<sup>6</sup>

In his speech, Bulgarian first diplomat emphasized the impact of the war in Ukraine on Southeast Europe and the energy and food crisis it caused. Efforts to improve connectivity, environmental protection and cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture and tourism need to be strengthened. Deepening the economic integration of the region would bring the countries closer to European standards and would contribute to improving the security of the European continent.<sup>7</sup>

In his opening remarks during **the General Debate** at the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York on September 24, Foreign Minister Milkov stated that the illegal military aggression in Ukraine undermines global security and endangers the international legal order, announced the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>8</sup>

The Bulgarian first diplomat defined the war in Ukraine, which violates the basic international rules and the UN Charter, as the biggest security risk at the moment. "This illegal military aggression by a permanent member of the Security Council not only undermines global security, but also endangers the international legal order," he said.<sup>9</sup>

Milkov noted that Bulgaria is deeply disturbed by the recent escalation of the conflict and the partial mobilization announced by the Russian Federation. "We live in unprecedented times of multiple challenges - war and insecurity, energy and food crisis, climate change, lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. And this list of challenges is far from complete. In these unfortunate circumstances, any contribution to achieve more stability and cooperation between

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.mfa.bg/bg/news/35117>

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.mfa.bg/bg/news/35118>

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

countries in different regions should be encouraged and welcomed," Foreign Affairs Minister Nikolay Milkov also stated in his speech.<sup>10</sup>

Milkov stated also that as a South-Eastern European country, Bulgaria attaches great importance to peace, stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans region, pointing out that Bulgaria will continue to support the countries of the region on their way to the EU.<sup>11</sup>

Dealing with the humanitarian and food crisis in Africa and dialogue and cooperation with the countries of the Indo-Pacific region were also identified as very important topics.

In his speech, Minister Milkov emphasized that if the consolidated and unanimous approach to complying with the principles and provisions of the UN Charter is built on, the current crises can be overcome, but at the same time there is a long way to restore security and economic stability after the war. "Whether we meet the challenge will depend on our unity, on our ability to act together, on the basis of multilateralism and with the leading role of the United Nations," he concluded.<sup>12</sup>

Bulgaria has condemned the so-called referendums on joining Russia, which are being held in several Ukrainian regions before the UN General Assembly.

"Bulgaria is seriously disturbed by the current escalation of the conflict and the partial mobilization announced in the Russian Federation. We also condemn the referendums that are being held in the occupied Ukrainian territories. We believe that they are not free and fair and that they have no binding force." , stated the Bulgarian foreign Minister.

"This illegal military aggression, which is being waged by a permanent member of the Security Council, not only undermines global security, but also poses a danger to the entire rules-based international order," he added.<sup>13</sup>

Later on Sunday, on the Bulgarian National Radio, acting Prime Minister Gulab Donev also condemned the Russian referendums and criticized the mobilization in Russia, which, in his words, "leads to an escalation of tensions, including the countries in Europe and those that are close to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, to have no certainty as to how long the hostilities will continue and with what intensity they will be".<sup>14</sup>

"Such an action by Russia is unacceptable, especially since it is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and should strictly observe the UN Charter and not threaten any other

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<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup> <https://bta.bg/bg/news/bulgaria/333172-galab-donev-shte-svika-saveta-po-sigurnostta-kam-ministar-predsdatelya-po-povod>; <https://bnr.bg/radiobulgaria/post/101709864/bulgaria-shte-nastoava-zazadalbochen-analiz-na-sankciite-spramo-rusia>

country with military force, which is a direct violation of the Statute of the Organization," Donev added.<sup>15</sup>

### **Conclusion**

During its participation in the 77th UN General Assembly, Bulgaria clearly and stated its position on all current international challenges, the biggest of which is Russia's war in Ukraine and the escalation of international tensions. Meanwhile, Bulgarian President Rumen Radev has also stated that Bulgaria will not recognize the results of the referendums in Ukraine and condemns the use of nuclear rhetoric, as well as Moscow's decision for partial mobilization, because it will increase the intensity of hostilities.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <https://bnr.bg/radiobulgaria/post/101709864/bulgaria-shte-nastoava-za-zadalbochen-analiz-na-sankciite-spramo-rusia>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.svobodnaevropa.bg/a/32048428.html>