

Grand Bargain in 2020:
Annual Self Report – Narrative Summary

**Name of Institution: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Bulgaria**

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(NB. Please limit your answer to no more than **5 pages in total** – anything over this word limit will not be considered by ODI in their analysis. Please respond to all of the questions below.)

Grand Bargain in 2020

Question 1: Reflecting on the information you have provided in the Excel spreadsheet, please highlight the 2 or 3 key outcomes or results relating to the Grand Bargain that your institution achieved in 2020?

In 2020 multilateral contributions account for approximately 85% of the total amount of the Bulgarian Official development assistance (ODA). We believe that voluntary financial contributions are essential for implementing the development cooperation and humanitarian aid policy and hence the country's foreign policy objectives. Voluntary contributions are, above all, an expression of political support for the mandate and the activity of a particular international organisation, but also helps enhance its credibility. Voluntary contributions can be used for the attainment of a particular objective, in line with the strategic priorities of the Bulgarian ODA, which gives our country a say in the decision-making and the implementation of projects on which the allocated funds are spent. Owing to resource constraints, Bulgaria dedicates its resources to utilising the capacity of international organisations and multilateral funds, in pursuit of its development cooperation policy objectives with a focus on countries that are impacted by crises or permanent instability. Furthermore, we closely monitor the effective use of our contribution to the international organisations, as well as the application of up-to-date practices in providing humanitarian aid, including achieving the objectives of the Grand Bargain and the commitments of the particular workstreams thereof.

In 2020 COVID-19 has presented a challenge of unprecedented magnitude to the whole world by spreading human suffering, overturning people's lives and attacking societies at their core. Bulgaria is actively involved in the response to the coronavirus crisis at the multilateral level, helping the international community to combat the pandemic by participating in the EU and UN-led efforts. Bulgaria has reassessed and redirected available financial resources to respond to the most urgent needs and to assist the most vulnerable in our partner countries in the best possible way taking into consideration the UN Secretary General's appeal and the UN-coordinated COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan. In this context, in 2020 Bulgaria reallocated ODA funds amounting to 630 thou. euro which were channelled to fight the COVID-19 pandemic mainly through a number of international organisations, e.g. ICRC, OCHA, UNICEF, IOM and UNRWA, which are most active in providing support to the population affected by crises in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, as well as to the Palestinian refugees. Additionally, we are reassessing funds to provide humanitarian aid on a bilateral basis to 12 partner countries from Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership and Iraq - we delivered protective medical equipment produced in Bulgaria and technological assistance for ensuring the functioning of the highly needed online education process.

In 2020 Bulgaria adopted the third consecutive Mid-term Programme for Development Assistance and Humanitarian aid, for the period 2020-2024. The Programme reaffirms our country's political will to be actively involved in the multilateral efforts and partnership to implement the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals, defined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2020-2024 Mid-term Programme builds upon and enriches the geographical and sectoral priorities of Bulgaria's official development assistance formulated in the previous strategic documents on the subject. It also defines the principles of developing and implementing Bulgaria's official development assistance and humanitarian aid: partnership, ownership, focus, conditionality, effectiveness, transparency, non-discrimination, which reflect Bulgaria's commitments under the Grand Bargain.

Question 2: How has your institution contributed to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment¹ in humanitarian settings through its implementation of the Grand Bargain? What results/outcomes have been achieved in this regard? (please outline specific initiatives or changes in practice and their outcomes/results). Please refer to the Guidelines for definitions of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which are included in this self-report template package.

Bulgaria has always been and remains strongly committed to the universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. We actively promote the role of women in peace and security and we are fully committed to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related Resolutions, which frame the Women, Peace and Security agenda. In this context, in March 2020, our first National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security for the period of 2020-2025 was adopted. The NAP provides guidance on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, identifies priority goals and measures, and specifies the institutions responsible and the timeframes for the implementation of the measures. Furthermore, the NAP includes measures to protect the rights of women and girls during armed conflict and in the post-conflict reconstruction process and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. The NAP allows for optimization of funding and reporting of activities related to gender equality in conflict-affected areas, prioritization of the protection of women and girls in unstable and conflict-affected areas, prevention and fight against all violations of women's rights, including sexual exploitation and sexual and gender-based violence. The NAP provides for further strengthening the commitments to prevent sexual exploitation and violence in emergency situations, increased funding for the education of women and girls, giving priority to education in emergencies and sustained crises, etc.

Furthermore, in the newly adopted Mid-term Programme for Development Assistance and Humanitarian aid (2020-2024) gender equality has been promoted to horizontal priority.

The commitment to promoting gender equality and women empowerment is coherently present in the Bulgaria's foreign policy. We aim at encouraging the participation of women in leadership and professional settings in the technology industry, at emphasizing the growing role of women in the socio-economic development worldwide and at creating opportunities for performance of the new generation of female entrepreneurs in the digitally based economy. In this context, in 2020 Bulgaria actively participated in a number of international events, incl. those dedicated to the Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 20-th Anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325.

In 2020 Bulgaria joined the UNSG Call to Action on Human Rights with a special focus, among others, on human rights in times of crisis; gender equality and equal rights for women.

When delivering humanitarian aid in 2020 Bulgaria was also attempting to enhance the local capacity building on resilience, on eliminating gender stereotypes and on full and effective participation of women and girls in all spheres in life.

Question 3: How has the humanitarian-development nexus been strategically mainstreamed in your institutional implementation of the Grand Bargain commitments? Please explain how your institution has linked commitments 10.1 - 10.5 with other commitments from other workstreams.

¹ Refer to the IASC definitions of gender equality and women empowerment, available [here](#).

An important sectoral priority laid down in our newly adopted Mid-term Programme for Development Assistance and Humanitarian aid (2020-2024) is entitled “Capacity building in support of security and development, including through support for good governance and civil society building”. The creation of a crisis prevention capacity will help building international peace and security in the zones of risk and instability and create sustainable communities. It is important to effectively bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and development assistance, as well as with the peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, with a view to eliminating the risks of a crisis that has unfolded. In this regard, Bulgaria is guided by the OECD Development Assistance Committee Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.

In 2020 Bulgarian humanitarian aid was targeted, as a priority, at destabilised countries and regions, paying particular attention to the crises that generate migrant flows. In this sense, our priority commitments covered countries of the Middle East and North Africa, West Asia and Afghanistan. In accordance with the humanitarian imperative, priority consideration was given to emergency response to natural and climatic disasters, as well as to protracted, often forgotten humanitarian crises.

In the context of increasing number of protracted conflicts, the number of people with humanitarian needs is growing. We believe that sustainable development and long-term solutions to problems like migration and forced displacement are impossible without peace. This requires consistent implementation of the concept of interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actions in the framework of the Bulgarian policy on ODA provision. The essence of this policy, in 2020, was a coordinated mobilisation of all factors and horizontal sectors to conduct activities for consistently supporting vulnerable population at every stage of the humanitarian crisis. In 2020, the triple nexus was also implemented following the horizontal priorities of respect for international humanitarian law and protection of the most vulnerable groups of the civilian population, with a special emphasis on women, children and people with disabilities.

Grand Bargain 2016-2020: Overall achievements and remaining gaps

Question 4: What are the 2-3 key achievements/areas of most progress by your institution since 2016? Please report on your institutional progress for the period 2016-2020, **even** if your institution did not become a signatory until after 2016.

The participation of Bulgaria in the Grand Bargain, an agreement between the biggest donors and aid organisations, is a privilege and a great opportunity to reaffirm our country’s political will to be actively involved in the multilateral efforts and partnership to implement the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals, defined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Being one of the Grand Bargain signatories Bulgaria is part of the transformative political framework to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development globally. We are part of the international community’s efforts to affirm the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, including the key issues of governance and peaceful and inclusive societies.

The participation in the Grand Bargain is an important instrument to help our country’s steady shift from being mainly a development aid recipient to becoming a donor country that is actively preparing to achieve one of its important foreign policy goals, membership in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. In the period 2016-2020 Bulgaria has significantly improved its administrative capacity and accumulated a lot of experience in the area of delivering development assistance and humanitarian aid. We learned to build sound and lasting cooperation with partners and with the international donor community, based on mutual trust and respect; to better adapt our humanitarian aid to the beneficiaries needs; to focus our efforts on limited areas of activity due to

resource constraints. We seek for more efficiency by partnering with stakeholders and donors in order to improve the quality and the outcomes. In the years 2016-2020, we widely opened for discussion the humanitarian aid policy of Bulgaria with the civil society, NGOs, the private sector, academics and other interested social groups.

Question 5: What, in your institutional view, have been the main achievements of the Grand Bargain signatories, as a collective, since 2016? Please indicate specific commitments, thematic or cross-cutting issues or workstreams where you think most progress has been made collectively by signatories.

The Grand Bargain is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organisations who have committed to get more means into the hands of people in need and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian action. The period 2016-2020 was particularly successful in connecting, more effectively and directly, the donor community and that of the people in need and in implementing modern practices and mechanisms to achieve this. The Grand Bargain continues to provide a unique platform for strategic engagement, collaboration and coordination between signatories.

Important progress was made in increasing cash-transfer programming, localisation and needs assessment, as well as in more extensive use of flexible, multi-year financing by collectively aligning reporting and assessment requirements. It was particularly innovative to combine “traditional” tools of delivering humanitarian aid with cash transfers. Progress was also made in enhancing efficiency of cash programming, as well as in better localizing/directing cash transfers and in targeting the relevant groups in need.

With regard to localization, more investments were directed to capacity-building support to local partners. In the period, more signatories began investing in broader policy vision and implementing long-term planning and programming with local partners. The progress in enhanced quality funding was linked to reduced earmarking and increased soft earmarking.

The Grand Bargain contributed to forming and constituting a unique community of donors and partners, who collaborate, coordinate and mutually influence their efforts to build a more harmonious environment for planning, programming and delivering humanitarian aid.

Question 6: What has the Grand Bargain not been able to achieve in its five year tenure? What outstanding obstacles, gaps, areas of weakness still remain after five years, in terms of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian action? Please indicate specific commitments, thematic or cross-cutting issues or workstreams where you think there remain key gaps or obstacles.

The Grand Bargain is a transformative agenda to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of international humanitarian aid. A lot has been achieved in the years since 2016 and the community of signatories is much on track to achieving the Grand Bargain overall objectives.

Notwithstanding the above, there remained substantial challenges in moving towards the original goals of the Grand Bargain. We should note that the community of Grand Bargain signatories is rather heterogeneous. This implies major differences and discrepancies with regard to the nature, the overall objectives, the administrative capacity, the management and operational structures, internal rules, etc. There are also differences in the level of ambition, as well as the willingness to spare no efforts in achieving the common goals.

Furthermore, the big number of commitments altogether for all workstreams make the whole exercise too technical with limited political engagement/investment and forward oriented vision. More strategic approach and streamlining of political engagement between the relevant humanitarian initiatives, mechanisms and stakeholders is needed.

It proved to be difficult to achieve substantial reduction of management and other costs down the entire chain of participating partners and structures. More could have also been achieved in implementing harmonized and simplified reporting to reduce the narrative reporting. The Covid-19 pandemic limited the possibility to increase the provision of flexible and multi-year funding and to undertake long-term partnership investments required to support multi-year planning.

The Grand Bargain turned to be too overwhelming, wide-ranging and difficult to perceive as one undivided, completed and consolidated structure. This is particularly relevant for some smaller participants in the Grand Bargain project. Therefore, some signatories are fulfilling their commitments, but due to their limited capacity, they lose sights and vision of the overall developments of the project as one consolidated structure.

Risk and the Grand Bargain

Question 7a: How has risk (financial, operational, reputational, etc) affected your institution's implementation of the core commitments since you became a signatory to the Grand Bargain?

In Bulgaria, we conduct ongoing monitoring and analysis of external risks, which are summarized in the relevant reports on a quarterly basis. Moreover, we believe that the risks associated with humanitarian action are an integral part of the external risks, therefore, we carry out monitoring and risk assessment of our humanitarian activities as part of the aforementioned reports.

As mentioned in previous paragraphs, the participation in the Grand Bargain was an important instrument to help our country's steady shift from being mainly a development aid recipient to becoming a donor country. The risks in this regard are related to our current capacity and potential to meet the high requirements of the Grand Bargain exercise. We took the risk to cooperate and collaborate with the largest and most influential donors and implementing structures/agencies in the humanitarian sphere, to learn from them and to contribute to implementing the humanitarian agenda in a modern manner.

Question 7b: How has your institution sought to mitigate or address these risks to enable implementation of the core commitments?

Risk management is a very important, if not the only tool to address and mitigate risks. In the above-mentioned quarterly reports we suggest/propose how to address risks in a way that will not negatively affect the ability of our country to achieve its aims.

We make further efforts to enhance our administrative capacity. The newly adopted Mid-term Programme for Development Assistance and Humanitarian aid (2020-2024) is a positive development in this respect. Furthermore, we are continuing working on further improving our national legislation in the area of delivering humanitarian aid.

Bulgaria want to participate in every modern project in the humanitarian field, to cooperate, to collaborate, to learn from the partners, to implement every positive experience and lessons learnt. We believe that this is the best way to mitigate risks and to make further progress.