

## **Statement by the Major of Sofia, Vassil Terziev Opening ceremony of the 61st Session of the IPCC**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

27 July 2024

### **Distinguished Delegates,**

It is my great honor and privilege to welcome you to Sofia for the 61st session of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. For me, hosting this summit is an opportunity to share our understanding that among other factors, the urbanization process is also a key forcer of environmental change. As a result, we witness negative consequences, which directly affect the way and quality of life in urban communities.

Climate change adaptation is a complex process for preparation and active adaptation to constantly changing climate conditions. That process is even more complex in the context of densely populated cities. The challenges span over a large array of issues, especially when it comes to skillfully balancing the interests of various stakeholders. Our approaches should be considerate and take into account the fact that we are all connected and everything matters – the biosphere, the urban elements, and our social and economic needs.

For meeting this challenge, we need science. My trust in science is immense.

This is why, I am happy to host the 61st session of the IPCC. I believe that your discussions will arm us with knowledge, confidence and instruments to face the pressing issue of our time that is climate change, and your work here will inspire and shape the world for future generations. Sofia is proud to be part of this global community, working together to create a world where economic growth and environmental protection go hand in hand.

Starting with Sofia, our vision is clear: to transform our capital into a sustainable, green, and resilient city that sets an example for others in Bulgaria and the region. Bulgaria's science and technological achievements are well known, and the establishment of INSAIT - the Institute for Computer Science, Artificial Intelligence and Technology is Sofia two years ago is proof of that.

One of our most ambitious goals is to become a net-zero city by 2030. Achieving that target requires collaboration, innovation, and a deep commitment to environmental stewardship. I am proud to say that Sofia is already making significant strides in that direction.

In partnership with Sofia University and the GATE Institute, we have launched projects that leverage advanced technologies to improve our urban environment. The establishment of the Center for Excellence in Research and the development of a "Digital Twin" of Sofia are just two examples of how we are using big data and artificial intelligence to enhance urban planning, reduce emissions, and create a healthier living environment for our citizens.

Let me also remind you that this should not be all work. I welcome you to a city that has stood the test of time; where history meets innovation, and things are always moving yet remain pleurably relaxed. Do take time to enjoy Sofia in all of its summer colors.

Thank you, and welcome to Sofia.