Oral Statement
Human Rights Council 61st Session
Agenda Item 6: Universal Periodic Review
Adoption of the UPR outcome of Bulgaria
19 March 2026
Delivered by Markus Hofer

Mr. President,

The World Evangelical Alliance, together with its members, the Bulgarian Evangelical Alliance and the European Evangelical Alliance, thanks the Government of Bulgaria for its constructive engagement in the Universal Periodic Review process.

We welcome Bulgaria's acceptance of recommendations aimed at strengthening freedom of religion or belief, combating discrimination, and ensuring equal access to political and public participation. Commitments related to upholding Articles 18, 25, and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, are important steps toward safeguarding fundamental freedoms for all.

At the same time, we note with concern reports related to ongoing political instability and allegations of electoral malpractice, including vote-buying practices that may disproportionately affect vulnerable communities, particularly within the Roma population. Such practices risk undermining the integrity of electoral processes and weakening public confidence in democratic institutions.

We are also concerned by reports that Roma Evangelical pastors and churches have been subjected to police actions, investigations, or public accusations that appear discriminatory in nature and that may have had a discouraging effect on religious communities. These situations underscore the importance of independent and impartial investigations, as well as effective safeguards to prevent potential abuses of authority.

We encourage Bulgaria to fully implement the accepted recommendations and to take concrete measures to prevent discrimination, protect freedom of religion or belief in practice, and ensure that no religious or ethnic community is unfairly affected during electoral processes.

We remain ready to engage in continued constructive dialogue and cooperation.

Thank you.