

I exercise this right to reply with respect to the statement made by the US Delegation.

Bulgaria is a part of those efforts aiming to improve the situation of Roma population in the OSCE area, including through the implementation at national level of the OSCE Action Plan.

We regard the recent events, a reference to which was made in the statement of the US Delegation, as resulting from certain social problems on local level exacerbated by the worsening economic situation rather than as a general negative trend of anti-Roma attitudes and action rising within the society.

Steps have been taken to address them within the existing institutional framework. On numerous occasions, including in public statements, Bulgarian authorities have condemned discriminatory rhetoric and the use of hate of any kind in public discourse.

Moreover, offences against national and racial equality are criminalised under the Bulgarian Penal Code and qualified with high degree of social danger. Recently, amendments have been introduced to the Penal Code by adding new grounds of discrimination and specifically criminalizing public incitement to violence or hate on ethnic grounds.