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**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 19 - 30 September 2016**

**Working session 15: Tolerance and non-discrimination II
(continued), including Roma and Sinti issues, including
implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the
Situation of Roma and Sinti**

Madam Moderator,

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti remains a milestone document for our organisation. Greater political will is needed in all participating states in order to fully implement it, alongside all the OSCE commitments in this area.

We see 13 years after its adoption that progress has been made, but there are still challenges: systematic discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion. Access to employment, education, housing and healthcare remains unequal for many. We should address these challenges through systematic, coordinated and efficient strategies, policies and concrete measures at the state, regional and local levels with the involvement of NGOs and Roma and Sinti. The EU and its Member States are committed in this regard and have a comprehensive set of strategies, policies and measures in place to achieve it.

Since 2011, with the adoption of the European Council Conclusions on an EU Framework for the National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, Member States have elaborated and are currently implementing Roma inclusion strategies or sets of policy measures within their broader social inclusion policies. These policies target in particular access to education, employment, healthcare and housing. Specific targets and monitoring mechanisms are part of these strategies as means to ensure their better implementation.



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The Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States from 2013 was an important step, as it was the first ever EU legal instrument for Roma inclusion assisting Member States in integrating their Roma citizens.

Furthermore, a permanent dialogue between Member States through 28 National Roma Contact Points to exchange good practice was set up. The financial support for Roma inclusion has been strengthened, not only in 28 EU Member States but also in enlargement countries. Over €90 billion is being invested for the 2014-2020 period in building human capital and promoting social inclusion and fighting poverty by Member States through the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund – and one of the investment priorities in this area is the integration of marginalised communities, such as Roma.

Since 2012, country specific recommendations on how to mainstream inclusive policies for Roma have been issued. In 2016, these focus on the participation of Roma children in quality mainstream education, with the aim of breaking a vicious cycle that leads to poverty.

The European Commission produces annual assessments of progress on Roma integration in the Member States, for which the input of the civil society is also sought. The latest report of June 2016 reviewed for the first time the Roma integration measures put in place under the Council Recommendation, highlighting examples of best practices in the various thematic areas.

Discrimination of Roma continues to be wide spread, being closely related with deeply rooted stereotypes and stigmatisation. Public condemnation of any act of discrimination, including anti-Roma rhetoric and hate speech from officials, political leaders and civil society is necessary. We therefore welcome the latest event hosted by the German OSCE CiO and implemented jointly with the Council of Europe¹ focused on strengthening the role of political leaders, as they should be at the forefront of efforts to end the systematic discrimination and continuous propagation of negative stereotypes.

The "Europe 2020" Strategy prioritizes actions that favour socio-economic inclusion of Roma people and prevent discrimination. In this context, under the banner "For Roma, with



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Roma", the European Commission is undertaking targeted communication activities to fight discrimination and stereotypes against the Roma population.

We perceive an increase in awareness and recognition of the Roma and Sinti genocide by officials and civil society organizations in participating states. We also see that more efforts in education and remembrance are needed so that old prejudices no longer manifest in patterns of racism and discrimination today. We welcome the good cooperation among many stakeholders in order to promote awareness about the past.

The EU will continue to stimulate the involvement of the civil society and seek closer cooperation among international organizations like the OSCE or the Council of Europe in order to avoid the duplication of work and to create synergies for a better and more effective Roma integration.

The EU will continue to help local, regional and national authorities strengthen their administrative capacities in order to access and use EU funds more effectively.

The European Union commends the work of OSCE institutions, notably the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, for their dedicated efforts in advancing the implementation of the OSCE commitments and assisting participating States to this end. We welcome increased dialogue and cooperation between ODIHR and the European Union on these issues.

We also welcome the focus of the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti on enhancing the public and political participation, as Roma and Sinti need to become protagonists in the decisions involving them, as well as contribute to the democratic development and reconciliation of the society they live in.

The full implementation of all OSCE commitments continues to be the EU's guiding principles. We take this opportunity to reiterate our calls for full implementation of all OSCE commitments regarding Roma and Sinti and our firm determination in this respect.

The European Union would like to make the following recommendations regarding the Roma and Sinti issues in the OSCE area:



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-) increase the efforts to implement all OSCE commitments, in particular the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area and continue the regular review of its implementation;
-) take effective policy measures to ensure the equal treatment and the respect of fundamental rights, including access to education, employment, healthcare and housing; take measures to ensure that all Roma population is registered and holds identity documents;
-) enhance efforts to increase Roma and Sinti children and youth school enrolment at all levels in State-provided education system and reduce school dropout rate; enhance efforts to eliminate segregation of Roma and Sinti at all levels in education; adopt measures to avoid that children fall victims to labour exploitation and trafficking and child marriage;
-) demonstrate further commitment towards education about and remembrance of the Roma and Sinti genocide during World War II;
-) support vocational training, on-the-job training, as well as self-employment and entrepreneurship;
-) enhance efforts to strengthen the rights of Roma women and girls and to eliminate discrimination on multiple grounds; fight violence, including domestic violence, against women and girls, trafficking, underage and forced marriages; promote the effective and equal participation of Roma and Sinti women in public and political life, including through the promotion of women's access to public office, public administration and decision making positions;
-) prevent further marginalization and exclusion of Roma and Sinti and address the rise of discrimination and violent manifestations of intolerance against Roma and Sinti; combat anti-Roma rhetoric and hate speech; pay particular attention to Roma and Sinti migrants, refugees and IDPs, many of which are subject of multiple discrimination;



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-) where appropriate, promote the training and employment of qualified mediators dedicated to Roma and use mediation as one of the measures to tackle inequalities in terms of access to education, employment, healthcare and housing;
-) where appropriate, enhance the participation of Roma and Sinti in the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of the policies that affect them;
-) enhance implementation of the OSCE commitments with regard to Roma and Sinti by local authorities;
-) enhance data collection with regard to the situation of Roma and Sinti in all fields of the Action Plan, as far as this is in compliance with the legal framework and overall policy of a Member State;
-) include, where appropriate, a monitoring and assessment component in strategies, policies, measures and programmes related to Roma and Sinti, as well as review mechanisms taking into account the respective results of monitoring and assessment, as far as this is necessary by taking into account any existing monitoring mechanisms especially in the framework of the European Union.
-) enhance cooperation among all international stakeholders with regard to Roma and Sinti;
-) continue activities of the OSCE field operations with regard to improving the situation of Roma and Sinti.

Thank you.

* The term "Roma" refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

¹Confronting Anti-Gypsyism: the role of political leaders in countering racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti.



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The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA, and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.