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Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the OSCE

Response to the US Statement on Roma

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Ms. Ivona Holá

to the Permanent Council, Vienna

July 25, 2013

Mr. Chairman, Let me thank the US delegation for raising the issue of recent anti-Roma demonstrations in the Czech Republic. I will briefly explain the response of my government to these incidents, which is part of the overall strategy in order to address both the causes and manifestation of anti-Roma sentiment.

The Government of the Czech Republic has declared the fight against racism, xenophobia and connected violence as one of its top priorities. It is fully aware of the danger resulting from further escalation of recent racist violence and manifestation of hatred in two Czech cities, Duchcov and České Budějovice, and thus it has been undertaking concrete steps to address these issues.

In order to enhance security of residents of Duchcov and České Budějovice, the police forces have been strengthened in the respective localities at the time of increased tension. In addition, Minister of Interior held a special meeting with the Mayor of České Budějovice in regards to realization of the so-called "crime prevention assistant" project in this city. Within this project, several crime prevention assistants from the Roma community should be included into the municipal police.

The Government Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Monika Šimůnková encouraged the involvement of the Agency for Social Inclusion in both cities, which should further contribute to calming down the situation. Additionally, she convened a meeting of members of the Government Council for Roma Community Affairs in mid-July. The members of the Council met with representatives of the police, the Ministry of Interior and local Roma community. In general, they appreciated a professional approach of the police and their work at the time of the unrest.

The Government Commissioner, upon the approval of the Prime Minister, decided to convene a special working group for solving social conflicts, which will take place on August 1. The goal of this working group is to define systematic solution of existing problems in a more detailed and effective manner. It shall include topics such as social housing, active employment policy for vulnerable groups, etc.

Apart from operational measures, the Czech Government has been working on long-term measures aimed at prevention as well. In this respect, it has prepared a special campaign against racism and hate crime, coordinated by the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Agency for Social Inclusion, which is targeted especially at young people. The aim of this nationwide campaign, which is supposed to start this year and of which costs amount to almost 1.5 mil. EUR, is to create active communities of people fighting racism via a creative and educational way.

The Czech Republic is committed to improving equal access to education and promotion of early childhood education for Roma children. In this respect, the Consolidated Plan of Action "Equal Opportunities" has been recently elaborated by the Ministry of Education and other state institutions, of which aim is to address the perceived lack of progress in the execution of

the D.H. and Others vs. the Czech Republic judgment. As you are aware, representatives of the Office of the Czech Government and the Ministry of Education reported on this issue in detail at the meeting of the Human Dimension Committee in Vienna last month (June 21), as part of voluntary reports by the participating States on implementation of commitments and follow-up to recommendations.

We look forward to further discussions during the HDIM in Warsaw and the SHDM in November which will focus on the implementation of the 2003 OSCE Action Plan on Improving the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.