



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working Session 7 –OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti: participation in
political life, overcoming discrimination**

**Statement by
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Warsaw, 24 September - 5 October 2007

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Based on the Draft Strategy for the Integration and Empowerment of the Roma and other relevant national and international documents the Republic of Serbia, particularly the OSCE Action Plan for Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area has prepared Action Plans (APs) in the areas of education, employment, housing, health, social protection, media and information, culture, anti-discrimination as well as specific action plans that deal with the position of women, IDPs from Kosovo and Metohija and returnees based on readmission agreements.

APs in the areas of health, education, housing and employment¹ were adopted and my government allocated funds in the budget for 2007.

The Ministry of Health has initiated in 2007 a competition for partner projects of health institutions and Roma NGOs. The budget for this Action Plan is forty million Euros for this year. Project priorities are preservation and the improvement of women's and children's health. In cooperation with the OSCE Mission in the Republic of Serbia, the Ministry of Health has initiated a project concerning Roma health mediators as bridging points between Roma communities and primary health institutions.

The Ministry of Economy and Regional Development has allocated for the implementation of the AP for employment of Roma. The funds have been used for the implementation of priority measures of the general employment policy. National Employment Agency organized the competition for subventions for self-employment of unemployed persons and the inclusion of unqualified work force into trainings for active procurement of jobs. Likewise, one of the priorities was the regulation of Roma settlements, which was a good opportunity for linking of the APs for employment and for housing.

Mr. Chairman,

In the 2007/2008 school year, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Agency for Human and Minority Rights and the National Council of the Roma National Minority, realized measures of affirmative action for the enrollment of students into secondary education and universities. Based on such measures, from the budget of the Republic of Serbia, 173 students were enrolled into high

¹ On January 27, 2005 Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted mentioned Action Plans.

schools, while the competition for universities is still opened until October. So far, 73 applications have been received.

The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the National Council of the Roma National Minority also continued the realization of projects that increase the access to kinder garden education for Roma children. Educational institutions participate in this endeavor, and through this project local Roma coordinators have been engaged with the aim of creating a better cooperation between Roma parents and the institutions. The Ministry of Educational continued the realization of the project on functional elementary education, within which local Roma coordinators are engaged. With support of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, the pilot project of the Ministry related to Roma teaching assistants will be continued and strengthened this year.

The Ministry of Infrastructure adopted the Guidelines on the Improvement and Legalization of Roma Settlements. Funds have been allocated budget for documentation for the legalization of about 20 Roma settlements. Since the issue of housing is generally within the competencies of local self-governments, the City of Belgrade has continued the work of the Coordination Center for the Inclusion of Roma and a Council for the Integration of Roma on housing issues.

Adoption of the remaining APs and the Draft National Strategy remain the main priority in this area, and these documents are currently being revised. The institutional capacities of the Government have been significantly improved with the establishing of the Department of Population Policy within the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, which has the mandate to coordinate issues related to vulnerable groups, including Roma, and the Department for Gender Equality within the same Ministry, which has given strong accent to the issue of Roma women in particular.

Thank you Mr. Chairman