

Delegation of France

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. FRANÇOIS ALABRUNE,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE, AT THE 923rd
MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 September 2012

**In response to the statement by the delegation of the
United States of America**

I should like to thank the delegation of the United States of America for its comments and wish to draw the Permanent Council's attention to the following points.

France is totally committed to the welfare of Roma communities at the national and international level in keeping with the commitments it has undertaken within the OSCE, the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe. I might recall that France also supported the Strasbourg Declaration of October 2010, which contains a common commitment to co-operation on this issue. My country also participates actively, especially in the financial area, in the Mediation for Roma (ROMED) programme, which is aimed at developing a network of mediators among Roma communities in some 20 countries.

Our position is based on two concerns – ensuring the rule of law and respect for human rights while at the same time improving the humanitarian situation of Roma communities. The approach adopted by the French Government in this regard places particular emphasis on individualized responses tailored to individuals and families, taking into account all the factors involved whether having to do with health or with social, cultural or economic conditions. It was with a view to responding to this dual concern that measures have been taken this summer to dismantle illegal campsites and to remove Romanian nationals from French territory.

The French Government has already had an opportunity to comment on this matter on 23 August. I might merely mention at this point some of the principles and priorities for action that guide our national strategy for the inclusion of Roma in accordance with our international commitments:

1. The operations to dismantle the illegal campsites are completely legitimate; they are carried out under a court ruling. These measures are intended to put an end to the deplorable sanitary conditions endured by the people living at those sites.
2. In parallel with these measures, the State, in co-operation with local partners and associations, has mobilized an entire range of tools to respond to the needs of vulnerable

persons, whether it is a question of accommodation or emergency medical care. Furthermore, social, health-related and employment arrangements have been made. As the President of the Republic indicated in his letter to the Human Rights League on 22 February of this year, when a squalid campsite is dismantled, alternative solutions have to be proposed.

3. The dismantling of illegal campsites does not mean that there is a systematic policy of deportation. Where these actions have been carried out, the persons affected have not been subject to decisions concerning deportation under European law, which provides for the possibility for EU Member States to compel European nationals to leave the territory of those States if they fail to meet the usual residence conditions. In cases where persons have returned, this has been the result of decisions voluntarily taken by those concerned. In any case, when a deportation decision is taken with respect to a foreign national, this is done only after an analysis of the individual situation of the person concerned, in conformity with the general principles of law and under the supervision of national and European judges. Obviously, this decision can be appealed before a court of law.

Alongside these short-term measures, consideration has been given to the possibility of revising the French strategy in this regard so as to make better use of all the tools available and to improve their application as part of a comprehensive approach. The OSCE's work in this area provides an interesting perspective for thought on this matter at the national level. The French Government also intends to do more to combat the channels that exploit poverty and people (prostitution, begging and such like).

France also believes that the responses to this phenomenon should also be taken at the European level and should in addition involve, in the search for a lasting solution, the countries of origin. It is for this reason that the French Minister for European Affairs will soon visit Romania together with the Minister of the Interior.