



*Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic
to the International Organizations
in Vienna*

**Statement of Mr. Martin Vavrinčik
Director of the Department of Social Inclusion
of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic
at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working Session 6: Roma/Sinti and, in particular, empowerment of Roma women
(27 September 2012)**

Mr. Moderator, Distinguished Colleagues,

Although the situation of the Roma minority in some Participating States has become a pressing pan-European problem, there is no doubt that the main responsibility for improving the situation of disadvantaged groups lies with the Government of the respective states.

The Government of the Slovak Republic is fully aware of the urgency to tackle problems which the Roma communities are facing and possible consequences if not doing so. Therefore the Roma issue is one of the Government's key priorities with the aim to create all conditions necessary for cultural, social and economic inclusion of the Roma minority with the special emphasis on the education of the Roma children as a prerequisite for such inclusion.

However, frankly speaking, in spite of these good intentions and all measures that the Slovak Governments have taken so far the Roma-related problem is still persisting. Although several substantial strategic and policy documents, programs and projects have been implemented in Slovakia, the overall living conditions of the Roma do not seem to become significantly better.

Therefore all these documents were reviewed from the point of their effectiveness and in January this year the Government adopted the new "Strategy of the Slovak Republic for the integration of Roma" covering the period up to 2020 in accordance with the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. The Strategy pays particular attention to the situation of Roma women and steps focusing on overcoming discrimination and disadvantages they face.

The new Strategy covers four crucial areas for Roma integration: education, employment, healthcare and housing. The Roma community itself participated in the elaboration of this strategy through the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma communities and through the Advisory body – Committee for the National Minorities and Ethnic Groups where it has its own representatives.

As I have already said we consider the integration of the Roma into the majority society at all levels as one of the biggest challenges the Slovak Government faces. However it is quite clear that we are not able to implement our national strategy effectively and solve this problem constructively without close cooperation with relevant international organizations like EU, Council of Europe and OSCE.

We are looking forward for such cooperation.

Thank you for your attention.

