

PC.DEL/424/16

8 April 2016

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1095th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 April 2016

**On International Roma Day**

Mr. Chairperson,

The first World Romani Congress was held 45 years ago, on 8 April 1971, and International Roma Day is celebrated in commemoration of this. It gives us a good opportunity to take stock of the current situation as regards the integration of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area.

Although no other single ethnic minority has received such close attention, the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area continues to cause concern.

In the main countries inhabited by Roma, including on European Union territory, they are still subjected to discrimination in the social and economic field and to exclusion from the public and political life of the State. Roma face prejudice, attacks and even mass expulsions. They persistently have problems accessing health care, finding employment and gaining access to education. These negative aspects were mentioned in particular in the 2015 European Commission report on the progress made in Roma integration.

Unfortunately, the assessments of the overall situation of the Roma that we hear from OSCE human rights bodies and the reactions to their specific cases of persecution are not objective. There are cases, for example, of mass anti-Roma protests, nationalist violence against Roma and Sinti and arson attacks on tented camps of Roma refugees.

In this respect, OSCE participating States need to take effective measures to fulfil their commitments to protect ethnic minorities, including with the aim of improving the situation of Roma in Europe.

An important reference point here is the decision at the Kyiv Ministerial Council meeting in 2013 on “enhancing OSCE efforts to implement the action plan on improving the situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area, with a particular focus on Roma and Sinti women, youth and children”. In the spirit of these provisions, I should like to put forward a few recommendations.

Firstly, education, social inclusion and the protection of Roma children need to be focused on as priorities.

Secondly, one factor affecting integration is the extent to which all participants in the process are ready for integration, whether it be the authorities, the general public or the Roma community itself. It is thus crucial, on the one hand, to boost the motivation of Roma to integrate into society and, on the other hand, to increase people's awareness of Roma history, culture and traditions, as well as the problems which they face.

Thirdly, for the economic, social and cultural integration of Roma and Sinti, consideration needs to be given to their actual preferences and specific identities, including the culture, practices and trades in which Roma have always traditionally been strong and successful.

Fourthly, experience shows that achieving the right balance in a policy to integrate all ethnic minorities into society also guarantees improvements in the situation of Roma as a component in any multi-ethnic society.

We are also ready to share our experience of protecting the rights of Roma. This protection is effectively the responsibility of a unique body, the Federal Autonomous Ethnic Cultural Organization of Russian Roma, which was founded at the inaugural congress of Roma of Russia in 1999. Its main statutory goals include preserving language and ethnic identity, developing Roma education and culture and expanding the Roma movement to all regions of the country. Similar Roma regional autonomous organizations have been established in constituent entities of the Russian Federation, and these help to boost Roma awareness of their ethnic identity and improve their proactive defence of their rights and interests.

Thank you for your attention.