

BULGARIAN DELEGATION
2006 HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

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Right to reply

The improvement of the social condition of the Roma and their integration into Bulgarian society has been one of the main priorities of consecutive Bulgarian governments for years.

In 1999, a special Framework Program for the Equal integration of Roma has been elaborated with the participation of representatives of the Roma community. Since then, several Action Plans have been implemented, with concrete measures aimed at the promotion of employment, the further integration of Roma children in the school system, provision of healthcare and housing for the Roma community.

In February 2005, at a ceremony in Sofia, eight countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including Bulgaria, launched the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015, thus reiterating at the highest political level their commitment to the improvement of the social condition of the Roma.

The National Action Plan adopted in Bulgaria in accordance with the Decade commitments contains focused measures in the identified four priority areas: education, employment, housing and healthcare. The Plan is being consistently implemented by the Government in all its aspects. Furthermore, from 1 July 2006 Bulgaria has assumed the rotating Presidency of the Decade until June 2007.

The Government is determined to consistently pursue these efforts.

In this context, the authorities also have sought to identify rational solutions to the problem of illegal constructions, in Sofia and several other cities in Bulgaria, where inhabitants, many of them Roma, live in very poor sanitary conditions, without running water or electricity. Special measures to provide alternative accommodation have been adopted and are in the process of implementation.

In all cases, due process is strictly followed, yet the social aspect is invariably taken into consideration.

In what refers to the utterly unacceptable comments of one Bulgarian MP, observer at the European Parliament, we had the occasion to share our views at the side event on “Police and Roma: towards safety in multiethnic communities” last night. We will here remind that this appalling act has been unanimously condemned by the President and the Prime Minister, as well as other political leaders in Bulgaria. Also well-known is the official position of the Bulgarian Parliament.

The attitude of the media, the non-governmental sector and the overwhelming majority of public opinion is equally critical.

Bulgarian legislation and the measures enforced by the Government to prevent any discrimination on racial, ethnic, religious or any other grounds are in strict compliance with the relevant international standards, including OSCE standards.

In conclusion, we reiterate the determination of the Bulgarian authorities to continue resolutely combat any such attitude and/or behavior – if and when such are manifested against persons belonging to any existing minority.