



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement In Honor of International Roma Day

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 10, 2014

In celebration of International Roma Day, the United States wishes to reemphasize the fundamental human rights of Roma. As Secretary Kerry noted, “we celebrate the rich Romani culture and contributions to our societies in Europe, the United States, and beyond. We also renew our commitment to remove the obstacles that keep millions of Roma on the margins of society and prevent them from realizing their full potential.”

The United States will continue to use the OSCE and other multilateral fora to raise our concerns about the deeply troubling trends we observe in the treatment of Roma in the OSCE region: scapegoating, anti-Roma rhetoric, violence, and violations of the human rights of Roma persons. We strongly urge all participating States to uphold their commitments and implement Decision No. 4/13, adopted last year in Kyiv, on Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area. This decision recognized the importance of Romani political participation — as voters as well as candidates — and voter education. We urge participating States to consider mechanisms that will improve, not impede, Romani participation in political life.

We thank Ms. Mirjam Karoly for the work she is doing as the ODIHR Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues. We look forward to continue working with her and her team. We see ODIHR’s project on Best Practices in Roma Integration in the Western Balkans as a meaningful step in increasing Roma representation in civil society and government. We commend the work of this project, which hosts programs ranging from internships in OSCE field missions to sports activities that integrate Roma and non-Roma youth, and hope that it can alleviate some of the challenges faced by Roma and Sinti communities in Europe today.

In closing, I wish to highlight in particular the difficulties being faced today by Roma in Russia-occupied Crimea. The Roma Women's Fund "Chirikli" has reported that many Roma people have registered their desire to leave Crimea after the illegal March 16 referendum and Russian military intervention. Roma face particular hurdles that make it harder for those who may wish to leave to do so, such as the requirement to list a permanent residence to receive travel documents. These Roma fear an uncertain future and increased discrimination, and we urge attention to their plight.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.