

Statement on behalf of the Roma Civic Alliance
delivered by Mr. Georgel Radulescu, *Executive Director*

24th of September 2007, OSCE conference, Warsaw

Honourable Audience,

The Roma Civic Alliance of Romania, which I represent here today, is a network of 20 advocacy Roma NGOs, established one year and a half ago, who's mission is to develop the Roma civil society to becoming the civic voice of the Roma in Romania.

The Roma population in Romania is one of the largest minorities in Europe. It is also the population with a big potential from the perspective of political, economic and social development. Still, Roma have to face numerous problems and barriers on a daily basis, such as: police abuses, forced evictions in Roma settlements, discrimination in accessing the most common public services (health, education, housing, employment), as well as social exclusion in all the areas of the public life.

The Roma Civic Alliance will act in partnership with public authorities to develop new and improve the existing public policies targeting the Roma population and to ensure the full implementation of these policies.

Our goal is to contribute to the improvement of the political participation of the Roma at both the national and European levels by:

- Building the capacity of local Roma groups with a view to enhancing the civic participation of Roma communities in Romania ;
- Strengthening the civic and voter education in Roma communities, and to improving the participation of the Roma in the local, national and European elections ;
- Catalyzing common actions towards improving access to political, economic, social and cultural life of Roma, on both local and national levels.

This panel addresses the issues of Roma participation in the political arena and overcoming discrimination. The isolation and exclusion of Roma from the political life are generated primarily by the widespread anti-Roma attitudes. As many of you know, the public attitudes towards the Roma are shaped and consolidated by opinion makers, media and especially by politicians.

A political spectrum without Roma politicians in mainstream parties is neither complete, nor inclusive. Therefore, the training of young Roma politicians and their inclusion into the mainstream parties is one of the priorities of the Roma Civic Alliance. Only this way we can talk about an authentic participation of Roma in the political, economic and social life of Romania. On the other hand, the Roma Civic Alliance wants to partner with political institutions in a joint effort to changing the attitudes and mentalities of the political leaders towards the Roma minority.

The Roma Civic Alliance strongly recommends to our political parties and politicians to actively involve in providing equal opportunities to young Roma activists through an *extensive minority outreach policy*. It is the time that the political parties should become more aware of the importance of supporting the access of the vulnerable groups to the political life. Each vulnerable group, including the Roma, has its own human resources, able to help the politicians to fulfil their mission: to serve effectively the citizens and to be accountable. The Roma Civic Alliance *has the capacity of mobilizing a significant number of university Roma graduates*, who show a real interest to contributing to the development of politics at the national and European level.

In closing my remarks I would like to thank the organisers of this event for opening this necessary debate and for facilitating the dialogue between the political representatives and the Roma leaders. This is aimed at contributing to a better understanding of the complexity of the issues that Roma minority is facing all over the Europe.

I strongly believe that the conclusions of this meeting will help the participants to building a real partnership based on mutual respect and confidence.

Thank you for your attention,