



## STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

### Specifically selected topic ROMA/SINTI AND, IN PARTICULAR, EMPOWERMENT OF ROMA WOMEN

#### OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (Warsaw, 24 September - 5 October 2012)

Mr/Ms Moderator, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Slovenia aligns itself with the statement delivered by Romania on behalf of the European Union.

We welcome the focus of this special session. We believe that the vulnerable population, among which Roma women in many of OSCE participating States undoubtedly are, deserves our special attention. And we should all keep in mind that the most vulnerable parts of population feel the worsening economic situation first.

Let me say a few words on our current Program concerning the Roma approved in 2010 and consistently, and in our opinion successfully, implemented. It targets the Roma population as a whole. The main goals of the program are:

- 1) to improve the Roma living conditions
- 2) to improve educational structure of the Roma communities, and increase participation/enrolment of Roma children in early education and later in the regular elementary education, as well as increase participation in adult education;
- 3) to increase the employment rate of Roma;
- 4) to improve healthcare, with the emphasis on health care for women and children;
- 5) to preserve and develop their cultural identity, also through publishing in Roma language;
- 6) and to raise general awareness of the majority population regarding Roma.

The Program was prepared as required by the Law on Roma Community, which – to our knowledge – is the only framework law addressing the Roma issues in the OSCE area.

This session and this special day are dedicated to the empowerment of women, let me say a few words on progress we think, although incremental, is there.

In Slovenia, in 20 municipalities (out of 220), where Roma are traditionally settled, Roma have their representatives in the municipal or the city councils. The **Roma Community Council of Slovenia** was established in 2007, and represents the interests of the Roma community in Slovenia in relation to state bodies. The Council may present proposals, initiatives and opinions in matters within its authority to the Parliament, the government and other national bodies. Since February this year, the president of the Roma Community Council is a lady. Further, it is worth mentioning the first Roma “policeman” in Slovenia (regrettably, up to now the only one) is in fact a policewoman, and the first Slovene Roma writing a doctorate thesis is also a lady.

Our Ombudsman/ombudswoman noted, at the Roma Civil Society Congress, organized on the occasion of the Roma day in April, in her intensive contacts with Roma communities, how the Roma women, with their substantial knowledge and abilities increasingly come into the foreground and more and more gain trust of men. Gender should become less important; all members should contribute towards development of their community. And added: There is time to embark on a new generation of thinking, empowerment and self-confidence.

To further cite our Ombudswoman - things will start improving when with education the Roma population, including women, will gain competences/skills, social power and self-respect, with which they can implement their rights the same way as all other citizens.

Some of you may have been here last year when a young researcher from Slovenia presented a project with mainly illiterate Roma women. The project showed that neglected and marginal groups within the Roma population possess knowledge and skills which can enrich the society as a whole.

The Roma women showed skills to make unique products/souvenirs as well as herbal healing products used in traditional medicine/treatment of illnesses. They also easily acquired the skills to promote their creativity.

The Phuri dej, as the project is called, made these women promoters of their culture and heritage. –No doubt a small idea that can have substantial impact on empowering women to become actors of their community.

However, despite some bright and outstanding successes (we can be proud of) we still have a long way to go.

We are committed to continue implementing and spreading good examples and practices. Social inclusion should not just remain a word or sentence in our declarations or laws. We should continue our efforts, exchange of views and positive approaches which can help words convert into deeds.

We believe the next Status Report on the implementation of the Action Plan will be another step forward in our efforts to finding ways to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti population in our countries.

Thank you for your attention.