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## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement of Concern Regarding Attacks on Roma in Ukraine**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 8, 2014

On April 10, in our statement on the occasion of International Roma Day, we noted our deep concerns regarding anti-Roma discrimination following Russia's occupation of Crimea. While in Kyiv on April 22, Vice President Biden said the United States condemns in the strongest possible terms all threats and attacks against members of Ukrainian minority communities, including the Roma. We reiterate that condemnation today, as credible reports of more recent incidents in areas of eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russian groups have illegally seized control of government buildings, appear to establish a disturbing and ongoing pattern of anti-Roma violence.

The European Roma Rights Center reported that on April 29 in Slovyansk a Romani man was shot while trying to defend his home and remains in serious condition. The New York Times reported that in the same town, earlier in April, 20 masked men, who claimed to be acting under the instructions of self-appointed mayor Ponomaryev, entered a Romani household, held a woman and child at gunpoint, demanded money and valuables, and threatened them with resettlement. Media further reported that masked men then fired into Romani houses, breaking windows and destroying property. There have been reports of an arson attack on a Roma home in Cherkassy on April 29, of attacks on Romani people in Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky and Korsten, and of Romani people abandoning their homes and fleeing eastern Ukraine. These are especially worrying as they suggest a general rise in the violent expression of anti-Roma sentiment in the area.

The United States condemns these attacks, and we call on Russia to use its influence with pro-Russia separatist groups to cease their destabilizing activity that could be perceived as enabling violence and intimidation targeted at Roma. We echo the Chairman of the United States Helsinki Commission, Senator Benjamin Cardin, in commending the Ukrainian government for its denunciation of these attacks and threats against members of minorities and its pledge to find those responsible and bring them to justice.

Mr. Chair, we call for all authorities in Ukraine to protect the rights, safety, and security of Roma. We thank ODIHR's Senior Advisor on Roma and Sinti issues, Mirjam Karoly, for commissioning a report on the current status of Roma in Ukraine, and we urge her to travel to Ukraine in the near future to monitor the situation on the ground. We also encourage the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine to be alert to reports of attacks on Romani persons and property and to follow up on these reports. Finally, we repeat our call on the Russian Federation to condemn all attacks on Roma and on members of other ethnic minorities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.