

Gwendolyn Albert, independent human rights activist

Working Session 16, Specifically selected topic: Right of the Child;

Discussions of children's rights should not be confused with promoting restrictions of women's rights. Unaddressed violations of children's rights, especially serious human rights abuses and crimes such as the sexual abuse of children, constitute a barrier to their participation. The European Commission has begun infringement proceedings against the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia regarding the EU Racial Equality Directive and Romani children's access to education. The new amendments to Czech law still do not address the de facto ethnic discrimination of Romani children during enrollment. Romani parents are still being given misleading assessments of their children's potential and thereby coerced into enrolling their children into segregated schools. Those who insist on enrolling their children into non-segregated education still encounter social rejection from administrators, educators, and non-Romani parents. I remind the participating States that in the 2003 Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti they undertook to consult Roma representatives when designing education policies, to ensure respect for the Romani language, to implement anti-racist curricula for schools, to pay special attention to providing Roma and Sinti girls with equal opportunities for education, and to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of their education policies with respect to Roma needs. A crucial aspect of desegregating education in the Participating states must be training for teachers in how to provide intercultural education that is fully compliant with human rights and training for school administrators on how to guide educators in that regard and fully involve Romani parents and children in school life, including school management.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To the delegations of all Participating states: Ensure that there is no impunity for the sexual abuse of children and prosecute it to the full extent of the law, wherever it occurs.

To the delegations of all Participating states and intergovernmental organizations, extensive recommendations to various stakeholders on the segregation of Roma children in education in Europe were published last year in a condensed format in the publication: [Segregation of Roma Children in Education: Successes and Challenges](#).

To the delegation of the Czech Republic, since the European Commission has begun infringement proceedings against the Czech Republic and other Participating states regarding the Racial Equality Directive and Romani children's access to education, I recommend the organization, funding and long-term implementation of the collection of data disaggregated by ethnicity from all schools to ascertain what ethnic distribution patterns are like in education; the investigation of Romani children's experiences of bullying, discrimination and ostracism in the schools; and the training of educators to transform educational environments, including at preschool level, into ones where non-discrimination and tolerance are the rule and the standard, not the exception.

To the delegation of Slovakia, since the European Commission has begun infringement proceedings against Slovakia and other Participating states, I recommend the organization, funding and long-term implementation of the collection of data disaggregated by ethnicity from all schools to ascertain what ethnic distribution patterns are like in education; the investigation of Romani children's experiences of bullying, discrimination and ostracism in the schools; and the training of educators to transform educational environments, including at preschool level, into ones where non-discrimination and tolerance are the rule and the standard, not the exception.

To the delegation of Hungary. Since the European Commission has begun infringement proceedings against Hungary and other Participating states regarding the Racial Equality Directive and Romani children's access to education, I recommend the organization, funding and long-term implementation of the collection of data disaggregated by ethnicity from all schools to ascertain what ethnic distribution patterns are like in education; the investigation of Romani children's experiences of bullying, discrimination and ostracism in the schools; and the training of educators to transform educational environments, including at preschool level, into ones where non-discrimination and tolerance are the rule and the standard, not the exception.