



United States Mission to the OSCE

**Concern over Anti-Roma Statements in
Slovakia and Anti-Roma Protests
in Bulgaria**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 2, 2015

The United States is concerned about recent statements made by Slovak politicians that Romani students needed to be segregated into special education classes due to genetic deficiencies caused by higher levels of incest in the Romani community. These assertions are not only highly offensive, they are completely untrue. We urge Slovak politicians and the government of Slovakia to develop a long-term plan to desegregate its schools, an issue of concern that we cite annually in our Human Rights Report. We recall that participating States jointly decided in Kyiv in 2013 “to ensure equal access to and participation for Roma and Sinti youth and children in education at all levels in State-provided education, including at the early education, primary and secondary school levels.”

The United States is similarly concerned by violent anti-Roma protests that took place in several cities in Bulgaria in May and June, including the village of Garmen and the Orlandovtsi, a neighborhood of Sofia. We would like to recognize the professionalism of Bulgarian law enforcement in protecting Romani individuals and communities from violence but note troubling anti-Roma rhetoric that attempts to justify the demonstrations by relying on discriminatory attitudes and prejudices. We encourage the Bulgarian government to speak out against anti-Roma rhetoric and violence and to take steps to ensure that the Romani community’s interests and concerns are adequately considered in policy-making that affects their communities.

We urge Slovakia and Bulgaria to address these issues in consultation with the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and, in particular, with the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.