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IMMIGRATION, MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, AT THE
2010 OSCE REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Warsaw, 6 October 2010

**Working session 7: Tolerance and non-discrimination I, including:
implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti; national
minorities; preventing aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism**

Mr. Chairperson,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to be able to speak to this assembly and to describe the measures taken by our country to support integration processes on behalf of the Roma community.

This year has seen the follow-up to the initiative promoted both by the central government of the State and by the local agencies, including through the use of community funds.

I should like to reaffirm in this hall the attention that Italy too is paying to the question of the Roma and Sinti, and this in a context of total respect for legality and the full implementation of the commitments assumed in defence of human rights. I should like also to confirm that Italy, which has signed and supports the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, is working to implement that Plan in a spirit of co-operation.

The OSCE and the Italian authorities share common objectives in this regard. We favour a European approach that, by making better use of the instruments offered by the OSCE and other regional organizations in terms of financing and expertise, can provide the bases for the solution of the serious problems confronting landless communities.

The situation of the Roma in Italy is the subject of careful national monitoring, which was started in 2006 by the Ministry of the Interior in collaboration with the prefectures, the purpose being to identify critical problem areas and devise the appropriate solutions.

Last year's report already drew attention to the fact that, among the priorities of its programme, the Government has selected the search for solutions to the problems facing

persons who live in situations of social and environmental degradation, with a particular focus to be given among these problems to minors. The intention here is to provide a lasting solution for the numerous and difficult problems facing the Roma communities and to promote conditions to enable them to live within the framework of the law.

To that end, the Government has made it possible for five metropolitan area prefects (in Rome, Milan, Naples, Venice and Turin) to apply, where necessary, urgent procedures and to develop the necessary forms of co-operation with the regions.

In co-operation with the Italian Red Cross, a series of operations has been planned for the purpose of monitoring the settlements and conducting a census of the persons and family units living there. This is to be the preliminary phase in adopting measures of a social, assistance-related and integrationist nature.

The first phase of the plan envisages the shutting down of the unlawful traveller camps and the start-up of integration policies for persons willing to respect the rules of social cohabitation. The plan also provides for a second phase, the responsibility for which rests with the local agencies, whose purpose is to regularize the situation of persons who have the right to remain in the country. To this end, intensive co-operation has been developed between commissioners' offices and the territorial authorities, who have in particular provided for infrastructure projects in the camps and arrangements for the transport of schoolchildren.

There are also plans to provide for steps towards integration that, reflecting the real differences between one territory and another, consist in measures of pre-school education, cultural mediation and assistance in finding work.

In co-operation with the communes, the delegate commissioners have adopted rules for the management of the settlements, which provide for measures to promote social integration and schooling as well as participation and sharing of responsibilities in management on the part of the travellers.

For carrying out these measures, the Government has allocated some 60 million euros, to which should be added the amounts made available by the local authorities and the European Union.

Initiatives promoted by the various ministries

The year 2008 saw the beginning of the work of the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds (EURoma), in which, in addition to the European Commission 12 member countries are participating, including Italy represented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and by the National Office to Combat Racial Discrimination (UNAR). The aim of the Network is to promote co-operation among member States for the purpose of countering the kind of discrimination that affects the Roma minority and to seek common solutions for the inclusion of these communities in society and in the workplace.

The work carried out within the Network has led to the drawing up of a National Co-ordination Table of all the competent agencies for the purpose of sharing information on the initiatives taken at the regional and national levels within the European Social Fund and

for promoting co-operation between all those who, in various capacities, are involved in formulating and implementing inclusive strategies for the benefit of this community.

In particular, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policy, in addition to the initiatives aimed at improving the living conditions of these persons and promoting their integration through the use of the Migration Policy Fund, has signed agreements with large communes such as Naples, Rome and Reggio Calabria.

Through the Fund for the Social Inclusion of Immigrants, measures have been financed aimed at providing social inclusion experiences through an integrated approach involving various aspects of community life.

Another fundamental pillar of support is represented by the acceptance of pupils belonging to the Roma, Sinti and traveller communities. The objective here is to ease the experience of integration and provide scholastic guidance for pupils belonging to Roma, Sinti and traveller communities as well as to facilitate relations between the pupils' families and the school authorities.

The Department for International Relations of the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR) has co-ordinated work aimed at involving Roma and Sinti students in the training courses provided under the National Action Programme 2007/2013, which is supported by the European Structural Funds.

A quantitative and qualitative survey has been made for the purpose of analysing the teaching strategies used by teachers in solving the problems having to do with the integration, reception and educational needs of the Roma and the involvement of their families and of agencies and associations within the national territory. This survey covered 50 schools in four regions in southern Italy and in the cities of Rome, Bologna, Naples, Florence and Milan.

Another aspect of particular importance is cultural mediation as an instrument to facilitate relations between the Roma and public officials. Cultural mediation is seen as an activity that cuts across the various categories of persons concerned, with particular emphasis on access to support services and activities in the case of public sector workers, who, for institutional reasons, must constantly deal with persons seeking these services.

UNAR is working to prevent and deal with racially and ethnically based discrimination in all public and private sectors of social life, such as work, healthcare, education, access to goods and services, and social welfare. In particular, using the services of the Contact Center, which can be reached also via the Internet, UNAR is involved in collecting reports and statements regarding facts and events of a discriminatory nature and in offering immediate assistance to the victims of discrimination, whether in the form of psychological support or legal advice, possibly even assisting victims in pursuing judicial remedies, should they decide to resort to the civil or criminal court. Beginning in January 2010, the service has been stepped up through the strengthening of its legal consultancy function and the establishment of a solidarity fund designed to provide advance payment of the trial costs facing discrimination victims who decide to go to court. Another activity has to do with the systematic monitoring of the media to shed light on instances involving discrimination.

Since it was established, UNAR devotes particular attention to the problems affecting the world of the Roma and Sinti. Something that has helped to focus its activities on this specific area of interest has been, first of all, an examination of the situation as regards the reporting of cases of racial discrimination received by the UNAR Contact Center. In some cases, UNAR has contributed decisively to the elimination of disparities in treatment; in other instances, having found in the cases reported possible evidence of criminal behaviour, it has forwarded these reports to the competent judicial authorities.

In the area of awareness-raising initiatives, UNAR has carried out a useful project consisting of the Dosta Campaign (in the Roma language “dosta” means “enough”), which enjoys the support of the Council of Europe and is aimed at combating prejudice and stereotypes as they apply to Roma and Sinti through a comprehensive strategy to bring people together and help them to get to know each other.

This campaign has already successfully spread to five South-East European countries (Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). Italy is one of the first European countries to avail itself of this awareness-raising instrument, which has so far produced excellent results.

It should further be noted that on 20 May 2010 the Government approved the National Plan for Integration in Security, which was presented by the Minister of Labour and is connected with the integration agreement. This Plan summarizes the strategy that the Government intends to follow, identifying the main areas of activity and the instruments to be used so as to promote an effective integration experience for foreign migrants, coupling acceptance and security through respect for the procedures called for under the legislation in force.

Let me add a few words on the question of statelessness.

Through Law No. 91/1992 Italy introduced into its legislation a number of provisions aimed at granting citizenship to the children of stateless parents who are born in Italy and at facilitating the acquisition of Italian citizenship by stateless persons involving a shorter period of legal residence (five years) for the purpose of naturalization.

In our country the status of statelessness can be certified administratively or established by an ordinary judge. The laws in force expressly confer on the Ministry of the Interior the authority to certify a status of statelessness and govern that procedure, indicating at the same time the necessary documentation.

To that end, the Ministry of the Interior, with the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, once the inquiry phase has been positively concluded, affirms, under a procedure of its own, the recognition of the status of statelessness. Statelessness may also be determined in court by an ordinary judge using every means of inquiry to establish the status of the appellant.

The Constitutional Court has ruled that a stateless person has the right to choose whether to seek recognition of his or her status administratively or through the courts.

Mr. Chairperson,

In this short statement my primary aim has been to illustrate the steps taken by the Government at the local and national levels to promote the integration of the Roma and Sinti communities. The Italian Government intends to remain constantly open to every contribution that may be of use in better achieving the objectives it has set itself.

However, the question of the Roma must be tackled in consultation with the countries of origin of the recent migration flows. To this end, there has recently been an intensification of relations between Italy and the other member States of the European Union. In our opinion, the threat facing the European and Italian institutions is one of creating in every country the conditions for the full social inclusion of these people, combining the recognition of rights with the respect for rules. The OSCE can function as a useful mediator in bringing about synergetic action between States for the purpose of combating the exclusion of the Roma.

For the Italian Government this is an absolute priority.