

Dear Madam moderator, dear delegates, dear civil society representatives,

My name is Natalia Duminica and I am coming from the Republic of Moldova. I am a human rights activist. I am Roma myself and I am going to address the issues of Roma and Sinti women.

Roma and Sinti women remain out of public agenda at national and local level. They are still absent from Roma National Integration Strategies. They daily face discrimination and racism in employment, education and healthcare. Roma and Sinti women are largely excluded from political and public life. The illiteracy rate among Roma women is very high, in particular among young Roma women. For example, in Moldova only 66 per cent of young Roma women can read. Lack of education leads to a high level of unemployment among Roma and Sinti women. The Regional Roma Survey revealed that only 4 per cent of young Roma and Sinti women have a full time paid job, comparing with 17 per cent among non-Roma women.

In particular I would like to raise the issues of young Roma women, who are regularly discriminated on the grounds of ethnicity, gender and age. Young Roma girls are forced to marry at an early age. Further, they are constrained to drop out from school and are exposed to poverty. In addition, early marriage is an interdisciplinary problem related to education, social environment, health, patriarchal traditions, participation in public and political life and personal development.

Roma and Sinti women are agents of change in their communities and in the mainstream society. Roma and Sinti women must benefit of equal opportunities as every member of the society. Roma and Sinti women must be provided with opportunities to realize their full potential. In this regard, I would like to recommend OSCE participating States **to mainstream gender aspect in Roma National Integration Strategies**. In addition, participating States must **ensure equal and non-discriminatory access of Roma and Sinti women** in education, employment, healthcare, public and political life. Concluding, I would also urge participating States **to address child marriages** within Roma and Sinti communities.

Thank you.

Natalia Duminica

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