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EDUCATION OF ROMA CHILDREN as IDPs/RETURNEES

I am Mensur Haliti, Executive Director Forum of Roma IDPs from Serbia, organization which established in the framework of the project “Roma, Use Your Ballot Wisely!” implemented by the OSCE ODIHR and funded by the European Commission.

Forum is created as network of grassroots Roma IDP organizations, the main objectives of the Forum are to present the concerns, needs of Roma IDPs in Serbia and to advocate for the solutions.

My today's short discussion will focus on Roma children from Kosovo both with status of Internally Displaced Person and returnee from western Europe..

The official number of internally displaced Roma in Serbia is about 23,000, but number of data by international organizations is twice as high. In the other hand, the number of Roma returnees from readmission is between 70.000-100 000. Serbia has not proved to have successful and sustainable policies concerning Roma from Kosovo.

If you allow me, will put an emphasis on some of the **key problems**.

- There is no policy for systemic inclusion of Roma children from Kosovo and Roma children from readmission for learning the Serbian language as the official language of instruction in Serbian education system,
- No policy for addressing lack of personal documents the Roma children internally displaced persons and returnees,
- Low awareness of Roma IDPs and returnees about the administrative procedures and requirements for inclusion of children,
- The problem of complicated, long and costly process of recognition the diploma of schools the children attended in the western European countries.

In this context of education of Roma children from Kosovo and readmission is a serious problem in relation to access to the education system in Serbia.

In this context, Council of Europe, Roma Education Fund and Forum of Roma IDPs in cooperation with and Ministry of Education in Serbia prepared a model policy proposal of educational model for Roma children from Kosovo. This model includes program for language support for children and program for professional development of teachers for the implementation of the model. After one year, this policy approval from the official educational institutes.

However, Roma children Internally Displaced Persons and returnees still expect the positive political decision from the government of Serbia for implementing this policy. Although

the policy was prepared by the key international institutions in the area of Roma education, namely Council of Europe and Roma Education Fund, the Government of Serbia has been reluctant to implement the policy that would address the following issues. The consequences of the lack of political will of Serbia to implement the policy proposed and adopted by governmental education institutes are the following

- only 7% of Roma children from Kosovo and the readmission is involved in the educational system in Serbia
- 67% of the same children do not have enough knowledge of Serbian language,
- 60% to 85% of these children, go to "special schools" (schools for children with the special needs)

Recommendations to the OSCE participating States

1. Government of Serbia should fully implement the policy concerning the problems of integration of Roma children IDPs and returnees.
2. Governments of Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo should design, adopt and implement the policies addressing the problems of Roma children IDPs and returnees in the area of education and language barriers.
3. Western European countries who signed readmission agreements should have pro active role and provide institutional, political and financial support for design and implementation of policies addressing the problems of Roma children IDPs and returnees in the area of education and language barriers.