



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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Working Session 14
Enhancing the implementation of OSCE commitments regarding Roma and Sinti

Statement of the Republic of Slovenia

Mr/Ms Moderator, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Slovenia would like to express its continued support to the efforts of the ODIHR and its Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues in enhancing the implementation of the 2003 **OSCE Action Plan**. Let us not forget that the mentioned Action Plan, although recognized as the most comprehensive and far-reaching compilation of international commitments aimed at improving the situation of Roma and Sinti, remains in large part unfulfilled. We believe that a more sincere political will is needed to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE region. In this context allow me to present some of the policies and activities of the Slovenian Government aimed to this end.

In March 2010 Slovenian government adopted a new, integrated **National Programme of Measures for Roma for the Period 2010–2015**, which is being implemented. The main strategic goals of the Programme are to improve the living conditions and educational structure of the Roma community, to increase the employment rate of its members, to improve healthcare, to preserve and develop their cultural identity, and to raise the general awareness of the majority population. The implementation is monitored by the Governmental Commission for Protection of Roma Community, which is lead by the Minister for Education of Slovenia.

In 20 municipalities, where Roma are traditionally settled, Roma have the right to elect their representative in the municipality or city council. The Roma municipality counsellors have the same rights as all other municipality counsellors. On 20 June 2007, the **Roma Community Council of the Republic of Slovenia** was established, representing the interests of the Roma community in Slovenia in relation to state bodies. The Council may present proposals, initiatives and opinions in matters within its competence to the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, the Government, other national bodies and others.

While we need to work towards systemic and comprehensive long term solutions, we also need to recognize the need for some urgent provisional measures. For example, by way of such a provisional measure, the central Government recently intervened for setting up a new water connection in Roma settlement Dobruška vas, Škocijan municipality, thus allowing a number of Roma families to gain direct access to safe drinking water. However, this can only

be regarded as a first step while many others need to follow. For example, the **Working group on solving spatial problems in Roma settlements**, in which relevant governmental representatives, representatives of concerned municipalities, experts as well as representatives of Roma are included, is working on sustainable solutions. It has prepared a document **“Principles of good practices by solving spatial problems in Roma settlements”**, whose goal is full integration of Roma in the Slovene society, by formal, infrastructural and social integration of Roma settlements in the Slovene legal system. This concept can be successful only in partnership with concerned municipalities, Roma population and state institutions and with social acceptance of Roma in local environments. The concept envisages also the participation of the Roma concerned and the financial assistance of State. The document was introduced to the Governmental Commission for Protection of Roma Community in March 2011.

In order to effectively combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, Slovenia started a campaign **“Dosta! Go beyond prejudice, discover the Roma”** back in 2008. The goals of the campaign are to understand and learn better about the Roma culture and identity; to inform and educate the public about the situation of Roma; to promote tolerance, respect, multiculturalism and coexistence. The ambassadors of the campaign are popular Slovenian rap musicians; the campaign takes place at various popular and known events, round tables and conferences, enabling wider Slovenian society to participate in and be aware of the Roma situation.

Training of public officials, especially the ones who encounter the Roma community on a daily basis, is crucial. In Slovenia, currently such training **“Awareness of stereotypes, bias control and prevention of discrimination in a multicultural community”** is ongoing. The programme for police has now been on for eight years. In 2011 other public officials were included in the programme.

Multiethnic police training helps the Roma people to understand better the role of police and trains the non-Roma officers to be more sensitive to the Roma culture and practices. The programme of training workers of the police at the local level includes two basic elements: training police officers for work in multi-ethnic community and learning the basics of the Roma language. Roma participate in the training, which benefits both, the police and the Roma. The aim is also to familiarize the members of Roma community with the relevant legislation. The programme's evaluations revealed that the participants of such trainings - both Roma and police officers - favourably accept police efforts for greater security in a wider community. It is even more important that both police officers and Roma become familiar with the importance of a dialogue and joint approach to solving problems.

Special emphasis must be put on the education of Roma children, granting them equal rights and opportunities. Slovenia is continuing the project of **“Roma assistants”** (project **Successful integration of Roma children into education**), which was presented in HDIM in 2009. Consequently, Roma Union has reported higher attendance of Roma children in educational institutions; the cooperation between Roma parents and educational institutions has improved; parents are more aware of the importance of learning and education. Allow me also to highlight the work of the **Roma Academic Club**, which includes young Roma and non-Roma university students and promotes the education of Roma. In April this year, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights attended the World Roma Day in the Kamenci Roma village, celebrating the opening of the new community learning centre there. Since

then, many and varied activities for the Roma (and non-Roma) children are taking place there on a daily basis.

In conclusion, let me underline the importance of the need to increase the participation of Roma women in public life and decision making. In this context, a project "**PHURI DEJ**" was financed by the EU and the Slovenian Ministry of Culture, mainly targeting illiterate Roma women. The aim of this project is to show that also the most neglected and marginal group within the Roma population possessed certain knowledge that could enrich the society as a whole. If you are interested to learn more about this project and its positive results allow me to use this opportunity to invite you to a side event, which is organized by Slovenia and an NGO Misija *S taking place after this session.