EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1096
Vienna, 14 April 2016
EU statement on International Roma Day

The European Union and its Member States see International Roma Day, marked on 8 April, as an opportunity to both celebrate progress made towards the eradication of any form of discrimination and marginalisation against Roma in full respect of human rights and recognise the challenges which still have to be faced in this area.

Coordinated and efficient strategies, policies as well as concrete measures at the state, regional and local levels with the involvement of NGOs and the Roma and Sinti community are needed in order to address these persistent challenges in the OSCE area. Public condemnation of any act of discrimination, including anti-Roma rhetoric from officials, by political leaders and civil society is necessary. Strong measures have been taken to this end. Political leaders need to be at the forefront of efforts to end the systematic discrimination and continuous propagation of negative stereotypes.

We commend the German OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office for making Roma and Sinti issues as one of their priorities. We look forward to forthcoming events in the Human Dimension which will provide the opportunity to address these issues, and invite participating States to engage fully on this. We commend the OSCE institutions, notably the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, for their dedicated efforts in advancing the implementation of the OSCE commitments and assisting participating States to this end. We welcome the focus of the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti on enhancing the public and political participation of Roma and Sinti, with a focus on women and youth, contributing thus to the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti and the Kyiv Ministerial Council Declaration.

The European Union is founded on the principles of equality before the law and non-discrimination: values enshrined in the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental

Rights. Yet, the Roma community living in the European Union still faces challenges and discrimination in access to employment, education, housing and healthcare. The EU and its Member States are committed to addressing these challenges and have a comprehensive set of measures in place to achieve this in all Member States. Details of these measures will be circulated in writing, but they include:

The 2011 Framework for the National Roma Integration Strategies;

the 2013 Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures,

the 28 National Roma Contact Points;

the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund support for Roma integration;

the Europe 2020 strategy, in the context of which the European Commission is undertaking targeted communication activities to fight discrimination and stereotypes against Roma;

and the European Commission annual assessments of progress on Roma integration in the Member States.

Finally in May 2015, the Commission addressed country specific recommendations to promote the participation of Roma children in quality inclusive early childhood and school education.

The full implementation of all OSCE commitments continues to be the EU's guiding principle. We take this opportunity to reiterate our calls for full implementation of all OSCE commitments regarding Roma and Sinti and our firm determination in this respect.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.