



## United States Mission to the OSCE

**Session 16**  
**Humanitarian issues and other commitments II,**  
**including:**  
**Roma and Sinti Issues, including:**  
**Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on**  
**Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti;**  
**Migrant workers, the integration of legal migrants;**  
**Refugees and displaced persons;**  
**Treatment of citizens of other participating States**

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Robert Bradtke,  
Head of Delegation  
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Warsaw, October 3, 2013

First, let me say that we share Ambassador Lenarcic's sadness at the death of a leading figure of the Romani civil rights movement, Nicolae Gheorge. Nicolae worked tirelessly to raise awareness of Roma issues on both sides of the Atlantic, first as an NGO activist and later as ODIHR Adviser on Roma and Sinti issues, and he testified before the U.S. Congress several times. We honor his enormous contributions as a relentless advocate for the human rights of Roma.

Turning to the focus of this session, I must express my regret that several consistently over-subscribed subjects have been both conflated and compressed into one working session. It is our hope that each of these topics receives its appropriate due consideration in future Human Dimension Implementation Meetings.

The United States supports the OSCE Roma Action Plan and views the upcoming Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting as a renewed opportunity to focus on progress towards its implementation ten years after its adoption. As we noted at the Tirana Tolerance Conference, success of the upcoming Roma SHDM will depend on participating States 1) sharing in advance of the meeting accurate information on their strategies and budgets for Roma inclusion, and 2) instituting annual benchmarks to measure participating States' progress in implementing the Action Plan. These efforts compliment both the Decade of Roma Inclusion, which the United States has joined as an Observer, and the work of the European Union.

Unfortunately, a distinct lack of meaningful progress is all too clear in achieving the OSCE Action Plan goals to curb anti-Roma bias and discrimination and improve the socio-economic status of Roma. For example, public officials in several countries continue to stereotype and disparage Roma. In the latest example, a French government minister commented that Roma could not integrate into French society.

And while the OSCE Hate Crimes and other reports have documented racially motivated murders as well as other attacks including arson and sniper fire, no participating State submitted hate crimes data relating to Roma for the OSCE Hate Crimes report this year.

At least nine anti-Roma rallies occurred in the Czech Republic between April and August, culminating in coordinated marches on August 25 in several Czech cities that resulted in the arrest of some 100 demonstrators. Mob belligerence and clashes with police at some of these marches cause us to be greatly concerned that further violence may ensue, as forewarned by ODIHR Director Lenarcic and Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Nils Muižnieks. Such events can serve as the precursor to mass atrocities. We welcome the conviction this year in Belgrade of seven men for the 1992 killing, rape, and torture of Roma in the Bosnian village of Skocic [SKO-chich], and the convictions in Hungary of four extremists who murdered six Roma in 2008 and 2009, including a father and his four-year-old son who were shot dead fleeing their burning home.

According to the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, 90% of Roma live in poverty, only 15% complete secondary education, and one out of three Roma are unemployed. Clearly, more must be done. The Roma Education Fund, Roma Graduate Preparation Program at the Central European University in Hungary, and similar initiatives by civil society organizations offer preliminary hope for improving Romani access to education and employment—although desegregation of public education is mainly a task for governments. The United States is encouraged by the efforts of Slovak Plenipotentiary for Romani Affairs and Member of Parliament Peter Pollak, who has proposed legislation to address the legal status of Romani housing in settlements. Conversely, continued evictions from settlements in France and Italy, and forced deportations from France, have contributed to the displacement of Roma without providing durable solutions.

Moderator,

Xenophobic anti-migrant rhetoric and violence, including by governments and law enforcement, is an increasing problem in the region. In Russia, nationalist groups have conducted their own migrant raids following a series of massive police raids targeting migrants in cities across the country. Social exclusion, unemployment, and the perception that authorities only pay attention when there are fires and violence contributed to riots in immigrant-dense neighborhoods in Stockholm and a other cities in May. The Greek government conducted migrant sweeps in Athens, but also has taken steps to publicly condemn xenophobic violence and has created a special unit of the police force to combat it.

Government-funded mobile ad campaigns telling immigrants to “go home or face arrest,” instituting “visa bonds” for “high risk” migrants, and stop and search campaigns in public places in the UK have the potential to stoke further xenophobia amidst rising anti-Muslim and other hate crimes. The fact that in my own country, 12% (891) of hate crimes were motivated by ethnicity or national origin, underscores the importance of ongoing efforts by the U.S. Justice Department to fight profiling of migrants.

Finally, we have called for participating States to adopt an OSCE Action Plan and accompanying Report on Racism and Xenophobia to address these issues. An effort to address the question of extending citizenship to ethnic minorities is also needed in the region.

Thank you.