



Statement by PA Special Representative Ambassador Andreas Nothelle at the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, Session 1, 7 November 2013, Vienna

The PA has been a tireless advocate for implementation of 2003's Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti. We have consistently stressed the imperative of abiding by the commitments contained within, as well as promoting the continued presence and discussion of Roma and Sinti issues – which are manifold and multi-dimensional – on the OSCE agenda. Most recently, in May of 2012, the then chairman of the 3rd PA committee Matteo Mecacci visited several Roma villages during the election observation mission in Serbia, an experience repeated by our Special Representative on South East Europe, Roberto Battelli, and I during the Bulgarian election in May of this year. In addition to polling observation, we engaged in an enlightening dialogue with representatives of the local Roma community, who expressed concern about a variety of issues. I will not go into details, but I am sure that a number of issues belong here and might be discussed during the next two days..

These individual efforts by the PA parallel those of our annual sessions. In 2007 in Kiev, the PA highlighted the important role of the OSCE in improving the conditions of Roma and Sinti communities in public life. In Astana in 2008, we reiterated our pledge to extend social protections to racial and ethnic minorities. In Belgrade in 2011, we issued a forceful condemnation of the continued stigmatization of Roma and Sinti across the OSCE member states, and pledged closer cooperation with European and OSCE institutions, as well as other political processes like the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. And in Monaco in 2012, we called on participating states to take decisive action to address the disturbing issue of Roma and Sinti women and children's overrepresentation in human trafficking statistics.

While there has been some progress since the drafting of the action plan, there is still much, in fact very much, work to be done. Practices of social exclusion, unequal access to education, economic disenfranchisement, and the particular vulnerability of Roma and Sinti youth, women, and children to these and other symptoms of discrimination remain pervasive throughout the OSCE. The PA will continue to call on member states to be both diligent and vigilant in tackling these issues. We welcome input and experience from individual member states, as well as the distinguished experts invited to share their perspectives and the representatives from civil society, in particular the Roma and Sinto communities. The PA remains firmly committed to participating in a sustained and productive dialogue on Roma and Sinti issues, and working toward a future that sees basic freedom, dignity, and access extended to these highly vulnerable communities.

Finally, we would like to thank the very small staff that is dealing with these issues at the ODIHR for their hard work and express our regret at the departure of Andrzej Mirga, to whom we extend our gratitude for his cooperation.