



United States Mission to the OSCE

Celebrating International Roma Day

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, Michele Siders
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 12, 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On behalf of the United States, please allow me to wish all Roma everywhere a happy International Roma Day. On April 8, we celebrate Romani people, their rich cultural heritage, and their societal contributions worldwide. We are also proud to recognize the over one million Americans of Romani descent who have helped shape our great nation.

To commemorate this day, the United States reaffirms our commitment to the equal treatment of all Roma individuals so they can be free to build the best future for themselves and their families, in dignity, wherever they call home.

Our shared OSCE commitments on protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Roma and Sinti are extensive and date back to the founding of this Organization. In November, we will celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area. This detailed and ambitious plan is “intended to reinforce the efforts of the participating States and relevant OSCE institutions and structures aimed at ensuring that Roma and Sinti people are able to play a full and equal part in our societies, and at eradicating discrimination against them.” In this anniversary year, participating States should recommit to implement the Action Plan and to “step up their efforts in promoting tolerance and combating prejudices against Roma and Sinti people in order to prevent their further marginalization and exclusion.”

Last month in Warsaw, our delegation had the opportunity to meet Dan Doghi, the new Senior Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues and Chief of the Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues in the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). We discussed his initial priorities and ways to strengthen our cooperation on these issues. The United States thanks ODIHR Director Gisladdottir and her team at the Contact Point for their work to overcome injustice and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Romani individuals across the OSCE region. We encourage all participating States to take advantage of these and other resources that ODIHR provides so that all can enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Finally, International Roma Day provides an opportunity to commemorate the Roma victims of the horrors of the Holocaust during World War II. We urge all participating States to include Romani experiences in commemorations of the Holocaust. Remembrance enables us to reckon with the past and build more tolerant, inclusive societies. We also thank ODIHR for its continued efforts to improve Holocaust education and remembrance.

The United States reaffirms its commitment to the human rights and human dignity of all Roma, condemns intolerance and violence towards them, and continues to strongly support the OSCE Action Plan.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.