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The situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of Europe

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 1924 (2010)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has noted with interest Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1924 (2010) on “The situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of Europe” which calls on the Council for Europe to strengthen its long-standing commitment to promoting the human rights and social integration of Roma. The Committee of Ministers has brought the recommendation to the attention of governments and has also communicated it to the relevant intergovernmental committees.²

2. Despite continuous efforts and activities carried out by the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers recognises that Roma, in many parts of Europe continue to be socially and economically marginalised, which undermines the respect of their human rights, impedes their full participation in society and effective exercise of civic responsibilities, and propagates prejudice. It agrees that the situation of Roma in Europe should be kept high on the political agenda of the Council of Europe. Against this background, a number of developments have taken place since the adoption of the recommendation under consideration which fully concur with the direction proposed by the Assembly.

3. A high-level meeting on the Roma was held on 20 October 2010, at the invitation of the Secretary General and the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers. Representatives of the governments of member states, the presidents of the Assembly, of the European Court of Human Rights and of the Congress for Local and Regional Authorities, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship of the European Union and representatives of the OSCE, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the Council Europe Development Bank and of the European Roma and Travellers Forum, all participated in the meeting with a view to identifying concrete lines of action to address the challenges faced in member states with regard to Roma. The meeting led to the adoption of the “Strasbourg Declaration” which includes a non-exhaustive list of guiding principles and priorities on: a) non-discrimination and citizenship, including women's rights and gender equality as well as children's rights, b) social inclusion including education, employment, housing and healthcare and c) international co-operation. These should serve as guidance for more focused and more consistent efforts at all levels, pan-European, national, regional and local, including through the active participation of Roma.

4. Measures were also set out for the effective implementation of these priorities, and to this end the budgetary means have been strengthened in the Council of Europe 2011 Programme and Budget. A specific programme has been created “Roma: promoting social inclusion and respect for human rights”. The Secretary General has also taken measures on an organisational level to ensure that the Secretariat's work in this field is organised in a transversal manner and on the basis of the priorities and modalities set by the Strasbourg Declaration, and to this end has appointed a senior official to lead these efforts. Immediate action has thus been launched with regard, *inter alia*, to capacity building – which will include a major forward-looking European training programme for Roma mediators and lawyers who will work to tackle access to housing, schools, health and jobs, and to link the Roma communities and civil society; the creation of a database to

1. adopted at the 1103rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (19-20 January 2011)

2. The Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers (MG-S-ROM) and the Steering Committee for Culture (CDCULT).



collect, analyse, exchange and disseminate information on policies and good practice on Roma and Travellers in member states; the development of close co-operation with institutional and external partners – including with Roma and other relevant civil society organisations, such as the European Roma and Travellers Forum – and finally, awareness raising activities, in particular further launches of the Council of Europe “Dosta!” campaign “Go beyond prejudice, meet the Roma!” in the member states.

5. Furthermore, the Secretary General has elaborated the “Strasbourg initiatives”, an open-ended list of good practices for concrete actions to be implemented by national governments, local and regional authorities, with an immediate and measurable impact.

6. The Assembly will note that the results of the high level meeting are largely in line with the present recommendation on “the situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of Europe”. The Secretary General will present a first progress report on the implementation of the Strasbourg Declaration to the Council of Europe Ministerial Session in Istanbul in May 2011.

7. The Committee of Ministers has noted the Assembly’s invitation to enhance efforts aimed at the speedy ratification, by member states which have not yet done so, of certain relevant international instruments.