



THE HOLY SEE

2016 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session 15: Tolerance and non-discrimination II – Roma and Sinti, the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti

Wednesday, 28 September 2016

Mme Moderator,

The Holy See is a staunch supporter of the commitments and efforts of the OSCE in favour of Roma and Sinti participation in the social, political, cultural and economic spheres of participating States. This support, which has been manifested time and time again, is reflected in the extensive work carried out by the Catholic Church among and for the Roma and Sinti.

During his meeting with Roma and Sinti in Rome on 26 October 2015, Pope Francis expressed his and the Church's recognition of "the precarious conditions in which many [Roma and Sinti] live, due to negligence and unemployment and the lack of the necessary means of subsistence." The Pope continued: "This is contrary to the right of every person to a dignified life, to dignified work, to education and to health care. According to the moral and social order, every human being must be able to enjoy his fundamental rights and fulfil his duties. On this basis it is possible to build peaceful coexistence, in which the different cultures and traditions protect their respective values, not by adopting a closed or opposing attitude, but through dialogue and integration."

The inherent dignity of every human being demands continued efforts within the OSCE to combat intolerance and discrimination of Roma and Sinti, and our common efforts towards full implementation of the *OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti*. The Holy See commends the many-faceted work carried out by the ODIHR in favour of Roma and Sinti, a work that should receive our continued support and that offers an invaluable assistance to all participating States.

However, the Roma and Sinti cannot be reduced to being mere recipients of assistance and charity. They are, and must themselves be, the protagonists of their own future. Pope Francis told the Roma and Sinti in the abovementioned meeting: "do not give the media and public opinion any motive to speak ill of you. You yourselves are the protagonists of your present and of your future. Like all citizens, you can contribute to the wellbeing and the progress of society, respecting the laws, fulfilling your duties and integrating yourselves also through the emancipation of each new generation."

The Holy See, in conclusion, notes that based on the 2005 *Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Roma and Sinti*, published by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, the Catholic Church carries out an extensive and multi-faceted apostolate to aid, support and promote the civic involvement of the Roma and Sinti. It ranges from the global engagement of the Pontifical Council and *Caritas Internationalis* (a Confederation of 164 Roman Catholic relief, development and social service organizations), via the national efforts under the auspices of the Bishops' Conferences, to the local level of parishes, convents or associations.

Thank you, Mme Moderator.