



Side event by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, the Permanent Delegation of the Council of Europe, the Permanent Delegation of the European Union and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Concept note for the side- event on: Combatting Discrimination
As a Root Cause of Roma Marginalisation**

16 June 2015 in Room XXIII from 11:00-13:00pm

A. Background: Human Rights Council Resolution 26/4 on “Protection of Roma”

In its resolution 26/4 adopted on 14 July 2014, the Human Rights Council recognized that for more than five centuries, Roma have faced widespread and enduring discrimination, rejection, social exclusion and marginalisation in all areas of life all over the world. It expressed concern that Roma continue to be socially and economically marginalised, which undermines the respect of their human rights, propagates prejudice and impedes their full participation in society and the effective exercise of civic responsibilities. The resolutions also recognised that Anti-Gypsyism constitutes a major obstacle to the successful social inclusion of Roma and the full respect of their human rights.

Anti-Gypsyism has been defined by the Council of Europe as “a specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanization and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatization and the most blatant kind of discrimination”.

In this context, resolution 26/4 recognised the need to carry out a comprehensive study of the human rights situation of Roma worldwide, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of Anti-Gypsyism. In its operative paragraph number 3, the resolution invited the Special Rapporteur on minority issues to prepare a study with concrete recommendations in consultation with States, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, regional arrangements, and relevant special procedures and treaty bodies, and to submit it to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-ninth session.

Drawing from States and National Human Rights Institutions' response to the questionnaires and a consultative approach with numerous international and regional organisations, non-governmental, grassroots organisations and Roma rights experts, the Special Rapporteur provides an overview of trends in State practice, highlighting positive developments as well as challenges in promoting and protecting the human rights of Roma worldwide.

In the report, the Special Rapporteur addresses the situation of Roma globally through a minority rights lens, using the four pillars of minority rights: (a) the protection of a minority's existence, including combating violence against them and preventing genocide; (b) the protection and promotion of the identity of minority groups and their right to enjoy their collective identity and to reject forced assimilation; (c) the guarantee of the rights to non-discrimination and equality, including the ending of structural or systemic discrimination and the promotion of affirmative action when required; and (d) the right to effective participation in public life and decisions that affect them.

This side event will give an opportunity to share the findings and recommendations of the recent study prepared by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues on the human rights situation of Roma and to learn more about the activities of relevant regional organisations and NGOs in this field.

B. Purpose

The event aims to:

- Convene a constructive dialogue with Member States, international and regional organisations, UN specialised agencies and monitoring mechanisms, European Union institutions, Roma and pro-Roma civil society organisations, Roma experts and other relevant stakeholders on effective measures to combat Anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma as a root cause of their marginalisation and exclusion in all spheres of life.
- Present challenges and propose current responses regarding the effective protection and promotion of the human rights, including minority rights of Roma worldwide.
- Promote best practices at international, regional, national, local and grassroots level in combatting discrimination against Roma and addressing its root-causes.
- Propose immediate and medium to long term action-oriented recommendations for the adoption of an integrated approach that combines measures in different policy areas, strengthen political will at the national and local levels; and build mutual trust and openness between Roma and non-Roma.

B. Panelists

Each speaker will have 10 minutes.

- Ms.s Rita Izsák, The UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues
- Mr. Ulrich Bunjes, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma issues
- Mr. Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos, Head of the Equality and Citizens' Rights Department, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
- Mr. Andrzej Mirga, Chair of the Board of the Roma Education Fund
- Mr. Jorge Bernal, Presidente de la Asociación Identidad Cultural Romaní de Argentina (AICRA)
- Ms. Mirjam Karoly Chief of the Contact point for Roma and Sinti Issues at the Office for Democratic Institution and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe,

Modarator:

- Mr. István Lakatos, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Observer of the Council of Europe to the UN Office in Geneva