

## **Declaration on the Occasion of the European Roma Summit**

**Brussels, 16 September 2008**

The European Roma Summit, bringing together representatives of the Member States of the European Union and of states participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the French Presidency of the EU, as well as Roma representatives and civil society organisations, has offered us a unique opportunity to jointly address the common challenge of fighting the severe discrimination and social exclusion that the majority of Roma in Europe face. We agree upon the following.

### **I.**

We will join forces and develop common European standards for Roma inclusion, based on the effective engagement of the institutions and Member States of the European Union, Roma representatives and civil society organisations, in order to achieve significant results in our fundamental commitments, namely: the fight against all forms of discrimination; the promotion of the values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities; the creation of equal opportunities for all; and the exercise of the fundamental right of EU citizens to free movement and residence.

### **II.**

We are committed to closing the unacceptable gaps in welfare and living conditions that exist between Roma and the rest of society as well as putting an end to the cycle of poverty and exclusion that many Roma find themselves in. We are concerned about extreme human rights abuses in education, housing, employment and health care systems, about increasing anti-Gypsyism and the multiple discrimination that Romani women face across Europe. We believe that the European Union and its Member States have a shared

responsibility to promote Roma inclusion and uphold the fundamental rights of Roma as European citizens.

### III.

We support this commitment with the necessary means and instruments to enable the achievement of real progress and visible results in Roma inclusion. To do so we will develop common standards and set targets within the framework of a Roma-targeted comprehensive European approach, whilst acknowledging that the crucial competences for developing and implementing policies, and promoting and empowering Roma fall within the responsibilities of the Member States.

In order to fulfil common standards and achieve shared goals, Member States shall draw up ambitious national action plans on Roma inclusion to be facilitated and coordinated by the European Commission through a mechanism that enables measuring outcomes and reviewing experiences. Joint actions of Member States focused on desegregation measures and the social inclusion of Roma and on elimination of anti-Gypsyism will be encouraged by the European Union and supported by European funds and matched national funding.

### IV.

We will build on existing expertise and Community instruments as well as experiences of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and initiatives such as the Roma Education Fund, the OSCE Action Plan, and the recommendations of the Council of Europe and of the United Nations. As a key priority for all stakeholders, coordination among intergovernmental organisations on Roma issues will be improved.

We will proceed with the effective engagement of our societies, local authorities, Roma grassroots organisations and the wider civil society. We will find ways to ensure the development, independence and better participation of Roma civil society in Europe. We strongly condemn anti-Gypsyism and abuses against Roma wherever they occur on the territory of the EU and beyond and strive to empower Roma communities.

V.

We will lead the way in identifying communities subject to human rights abuses and hardest hit by poverty and social exclusion, and in developing effective and sustainable policies that can be applied to other disadvantaged minorities.

We believe that the European Roma Summit will be remembered as a moment of recognition of the need for urgent action to combat the discrimination faced by Roma in Europe and of opening new paths and opportunities for collective action.

*[To be signed by representatives of all participant institutions and organizations]*