



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
STATEMENT BY MR. LARS SIGURD VALVATNE
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OSCE ACTION PLAN ON ROMA AND SINTI: PARTICIPATION IN
POLITICAL LIFE, OVERCOMING DISCRIMINATION
WORKING SESSION 6 AND 7

Warszawa, September 27, 2007

Mr. Moderator,

Four years ago the Action Plan on improving the situation for Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area was adopted. However in spite of the commitments made in the OSCE area, the situation of the Roma at large has not improved appreciably. There are no massive changes in the social conditions as pledged for in chapter IV on addressing socio-economic issues and in the access to education as mentioned in chapter V of the Action Plan.

Mr. Moderator,

Increased social and political participation in society by the Roma and Sinti is of fundamental importance in order to reduce or indeed eliminate discrimination and segregation. This requires equal efforts by both the society at large and the Roma and Sinti.

Nevertheless, we have to admit that the responsibilities are not evenly divided. The efforts of governments, national and local, to enable full social and political participation are of primary importance.

Mr. Moderator,

I would like to centre my following remarks on three key notions regarding the social and political participation among Roma and Sinti: **obstacle, challenge and choice.**

Norway considers the demonstrated lack of political will to allocate sufficient resources for the implementation of our obligations at the national and local level and the discrimination experienced by Roma and Sinti as the main **obstacle** regarding the topic of this meeting... Social and economical marginalisation does not encourage such participation. Basic needs must be met and social inclusion and cohesion ensured in order to develop the political potential the Roma and Sinti represent.

The main **challenge**, how to mobilize and increase the interest and participation in politics among the Roma at large by information and training, must be met. There are to day prominent Roma politicians at local, central and international level. The political participation at the grass-root level, however, is still to a large extent lacking. This needs to be remedied.

The final key notion is **choice** of political strategy. Political participation may be in the mainstream politics or in the clearly defined ethno politics through parties or bodies and institutions. The Norwegian society comprises both, e.g. the establishment of the Sami Parliament. Hungary is another example where, at a very early stage there were established systems of political parties and bodies both for the various national minorities and for the Roma and Sinti. Special ethno political systems highlight the situation for minorities which is good. However, political participation only limited to such systems and institutions may increase suspicion in other parts of society and may not contribute to full and equal participation in areas of concern to all members of society. Institutions limited to merely one minority may cause a lack of involvement by both the majority and by the mainstream political institutions.

Mr Moderator,

As the Roma and Sinti progressively get more active and more involved in the political process, it will be up to them to find the strategies that best will serve their legitimate concerns and interests.

Thank you Mr. Moderator