

HDIM 2013

Working Session 16: Humanitarian issues and other commitments II, including:

- Roma and Sinti issues, including: Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti;
- Migrant workers, the integration of legal migrants;
- Refugees and displaced persons;
- Treatment of citizens of other participating States.

Rapporteur: Chad Wilton, Political Officer, United States Mission to the OSCE

ODIHR Director Janez Lenarčič opened Working Session 16 on Roma/Sinti, migrants, and refugees by remarking that participating States need to think more about migrant integration, especially in difficult economic times when strains with host societies increase. Internally displaced persons are likewise a concern, especially for those facing long-term displacement, and he urged participating States to focus more on their needs. Lenarčič announced the publication of ODIHR's 10th anniversary report on the implementation of the 2003 OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti. Lenarčič concluded by noting that while the situation for Roma/Sinti has received increased attention and funding, the overall situation for Roma/Sinti peoples remain unsatisfying.

Introducer Vladimir Petronijević, Executive Director of the Serbian "Group 404" focused his remarks on the progress made in recent years by refugees from the Western Balkans. He noted that when some visa regimes were liberalized, the result was an increase in refugees from the countries that received visa liberalization. Mr. Petronijević urged greater awareness by participating States of the brain drains that harm the countries of origin.

32 interventions were delivered, including 11 by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 18 by participating States, and 3 from other international organizations. In addition, 10 participating States exercised their right of reply.

Many participating States discussed their national Roma/Sinti action plans and the steps they had taken toward increasing inclusion of Roma/Sinti in their societies. All expressed support for Roma/Sinti and increasing inclusiveness. Several participating States and NGOs, however, observed shortcomings in the lack of progress in the implementation of these action plans.

Certain participating States and NGOs acknowledged the lack of time to discuss Roma/Sinti, migrants, and refugees simultaneously and, therefore, focused on just one topic in their oral intervention. Several participating States focused on migration and discussed the resources they expend toward enhancing integration. Other interventions discussed the problems that economic migrants from Central Asia encounter and suggested greater legal support for workers that are exploited. One OSCE partner noted that it had become a transit point for migrants seeking to travel to Europe and discussed their recent national action plan to assist migrants who remain.

Internally displaced persons were raised by several participating States and NGOs in places where "frozen conflicts" exist. One international organization stated that there are 4.8 million refugees in the OSCE region.

Recommendations to the participating States:

- Avoid social tensions in the society, illegal immigrants should be given the right to work;
- Achieve integration and the possibility for migrants to work in the jobs for which they are qualified, degrees/qualifications obtained in the state of origin should be recognized;
- Integration process for children should start early to improve opportunities for success in school;
- Children of migrants should be enrolled in kindergarten for two years, rather than one, to better acquire language skills in the host country;
- Discrimination and racism against Roma/Sinti must be promptly and loudly condemned;
- Participating States should hire a greater number of qualified Roma/Sinti for positions in government;
- Numbers of illegal labor migrants should be reduced by creating and promoting legal channels for labour migration;
- Illegal migrants should be given a path to gain legal status;
- Authorities should train migrants on national integration policies, teach them the local language, and facilitate contacts with civil society working on their integration.

Recommendations to the OSCE, its institutions and field operations:

- OSCE to respond to discrimination against Roma by courts in Russian Federation;
- OSCE called to improve policies on displacement due to environmental disasters;
- Under the Swiss Chairmanship, the OSCE should develop mechanisms for the protection of rights of maritime workers;
- OSCE invited to develop a document aimed at addressing IDPs rights based on the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement;
- OSCE to take measures to lift obstacles to freedom of movement in across occupation lines;
- Relevant UN bodies including the UNHCR should be allowed access in Nagorno-Karabakh.