

**Review Conference 2010, Warsaw, 30 September - 08 October 2010**  
**Working Session 7: Tolerance and Non-Discrimination I**

**Statement of "ternYpe – International Roma Youth Network"**

Two weeks ago most heads of states from around the world have met in the United Nations General Assembly to assess the progress in achieving the 8 Millennium Development Goals. The current situation proves that the governmental actions are far behind their promises and there is a great doubt if the global community will succeed. While the attention mainly goes to countries in Africa, we shall not forget the challenges in Europe: Will our governments fulfill the commitments to erase poverty? Will all children have the possibility to finish an elementary, secondary and maybe higher education? The situation of Roma in Europe continues to be outrageous - and even worse - discrimination and stigmatization deepen the social exclusion and lead to anti-Roma rhetoric and violence on all levels of society, media and politics.

This situation puts in doubt not just the prosperous, tolerant and peaceful future of Europe, but it puts under risk the potentials and the future of a huge group of young people! Over 30 % of Roma are currently under 14 years, probably half of the Roma population is under 18 years old and this in a constantly aging society. If we do not invest into Roma young people now, there will be another lost generation which could make a change. A key issue will be to tackle the root causes of their social exclusion. Exclusionary mechanism based on stigmatization in education and employment stop young people to develop their potentials and capacity. Many young people have difficulties with their cultural background because of the ongoing experience of discrimination. We can see a strong mechanism of self-stigmatization. Many other young people who manage to successful move forward, feel forced to deny their identity and never invest their capacity for their community. While this situation seems to apply all around Europe, we face a new struggle and challenge for Roma youngsters who earlier or lately migrated to Western Europe: A huge generation of youngsters lives day by day without perspective because our governments want to deport them even after 10 or 20 years with a refugee status, for example to Kosovo, which will result in a social and humanitarian disaster. Many newly arrived EU citizens are denied the right of education and will grow up marginalized, uneducated and without perspectives.

We as Roma youth should have access to actively take part in shaping our own future. Active citizenship is necessary to ensure a sustainable society where every voice is heard regardless of social class, gender, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. Only a society that respects human rights is able to fight the threats against the same values. We are part of a new generation of Roma. Many of us are well integrated and well educated; we are proud of our identity and affirmative in our actions.

"ternYpe" - International Roma Youth Network is a network of youth and youth associations, which creates space for young people to become active citizens through empowerment, mobilization, self-organization and participation. We believe in the common efforts by creating trust, and mutual respect between Roma and non-Roma youth. During this year 2010 we have organized the first European Roma Youth Summit as a youth campaign and youth conference parallel to the Roma Summit in order to strengthen our voice and visibility. In August we have organized an international seminar with young Roma, Jews, Poles and Germans to commemorate the Roma Genocide and to discuss current extremist and racist movements. Our main work takes place on local and national level to build up grassroots and to mobilize and to empower young people.

**Demands**

As young Roma we want to raise the public awareness of our involvement as active citizens and equal actors in society. On behalf of "ternYpe" we demand a strong compromise of the OSCE, its member states and other relevant stakeholders, for establishing a channel of communication with the youth and including a youth dimension in their programs and policies. These policies should be developed based on a mutual dialogue between young people and the policy-makers. Roma young people must also be involved in decision-making processes to strengthen a positive image of Roma and their voice against discrimination and stigmatization. Having a voice is essential for our active citizenship and participation.

Although some people say that we young people are the future, let me tell you: We are also the present! Do not wait for the future! Start acting NOW!