

Speaking notes for Mr John WARMISHAM

15th Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM)

Athens, Greece, 22 May-25 May 2018

### Agenda Item 2.3

Dear Colleagues,

First of all I would like to thank Ms Chalilopoulou and Mr Rantis for their excellent outline of our joint efforts to restrengthen the Greek Roma Network. As the Thematic Spokesperson on Roma and Travellers I was involved in the process from the very beginning and I am happy to see that the Roma network is, thanks to KEDE, on a good way now.

The Greek Roma network is together with the Ukrainian Alliance the second network that the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion has set up together with its national partners and the Roma and Travellers Team. It all started after the end of the ROMED2 project in Ukraine, when municipalities asked for a follow-up structure to continue working together in a network. Upon this commitment we were able to build the Ukrainian Alliance.

We experienced the same engagement just last month in Greece, when we proposed to restrengthen the RomNet. Representatives from 28 municipalities attended and expressed their will, to contribute to the network. Thanks to Ms Chalilopoulou's and Mr Rantis' dedication and organization the kick off meeting was already a real success. Nevertheless, I would like to propose to set up a sustainable structure with a presidency. Each year another municipality could take over the board of the Roma Network for example. The presidency could organize regular meetings and act as an interlocutor to the European Alliance for Roma Inclusion.

Such umbrella networks could eventually become the national partners of the Congress' activities on Roma inclusion. Already today, after having set up networks in Ukraine and Greece, we witness that communication is much easier when you have national interlocutors instead of hundreds of individual municipalities.

I would like to encourage all my CAHROM colleagues to support the founding of national networks of local authorities for Roma inclusion in their home countries. Together with your support, the European Alliance for Roma Inclusion could eventually set up such networks in all member states.

Finally, I would like to invite all of you to further circulate the Declaration against anti-Gypsyism among municipalities and regions in your countries. Signatories of the Declaration express their will to reject all forms of discrimination, violence or incitement to hate speech against Roma in their municipalities or regions. They refuse to display, publish or distribute in any way views and positions that could stir or incite anti-Roma sentiments. They declare to refrain from any political alliance building or co-operation with political parties that incite racial or ethnic prejudices. Rather they encourage members of the Roma and Travellers communities to become themselves active in the political representation, as representation of ethnic minority groups is an integral part of the democratic process.

The Declaration was endorsed by the Congress in March 2017, and after one year and a couple of months have passed, I am happy to announce that we have received our 100<sup>th</sup> signature just last week. The 100<sup>th</sup> signatory is Mr Ivo Zinic, the County Governor of Sisak-Moslavina County in Croatia.

To conclude, I would like to ask you to keep the Congress activities in mind when you work on your projects at home. The Congress is always happy to cooperate on the topic of Roma inclusion. Let us join forces to make full Roma inclusion not only a far-off wish but a close reality.

Thank you,