



## **Declaration of the Third International Roma Women's Conference/ First World Congress of Roma women**

**Granada (Spain)**

**23-25 October 2011**

We, the Roma women from different corners of the World came together in the third International Roma Women's Conference and their First World Congress held in Granada, Spain, in October 23-25 2011, to discuss and take action against worrying developments affecting Romani communities especially Romani women and children in Europe.

We express our deep concern regarding the various forms of anti-gypsyism with a trend of growing and spreading across Europe over the past few years. Romani women tend to be more vulnerable to various forms of violence, forced evictions and economic deprivation. They are more and more pushed to the margins of society, scape-goated, inflicted in their dignity as persons. Basic rights such as the recognition of Romani women's legal status and citizenship are being denied or inadequately addressed.

Romani women play a crucial role in situations of crisis. They find themselves many times vulnerable placed in the front lines and inequitable risk position. Because community strategies are not always gender friendly, we have to play a key role both in the prevention crisis as well as post-crisis rehabilitation processes.

Harmful practices such as early/arranged/forced marriages, bride kidnapping, virginity testing and harmful gender identities are prevalent in certain Roma communities across Europe. Not only they violate basic human rights but they also place a clear barrier to both individual and community development. Roma women at the meeting reminded that deep poverty, further discrimination and exclusion reinforce such practices. We consider that the solution to those harmful practices is to undertake comprehensive human rights and development approach thus combining investments in the area of education especially of the girl child and the fight against poverty and discrimination.

Human rights situation of our children, women and youth beggars must be addressed with no further delay. Begging is neither our culture nor our traditional occupation. It is rather the culture of poverty, chronic unemployment, discrimination and exclusion. Our recommendation is that governments implement preventive development measures and refrain from enforcing punitive sanctions because the goal should be to integrate children and youth into inclusive education systems and their parents into formal labor markets across Europe. Therefore, it is the role of the civil society to push governments to uphold their obligations under International and European treaties and ensure that Romani women can enjoy their fundamental rights.

Romani women underlined that historical facts about Roma and Romani women are many times misrepresented or simply lacking, thus leading to internalized racism, especially in the young generations and/or to negative perceptions and anti-gypsyism. Governments are responsible for providing the tools and mechanisms for Roma history to be acknowledged and transmitted as part of their national history.

We remain concerned that the human rights of our children and their right to development in particular is seriously undermined by the disproportionate representation of Roma children into special education classes in certain countries across Europe. Roma women call on Governments to revise national criteria based upon which children are placed into special education classes, take action together with parents to initiate a process of re-diagnosing of children placed in institutions for mentally disabled.

Roma women in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary still struggle to gain public acknowledgment and remedy over the practice of forced sterilizations. Governments should take concrete steps to compensate the victims, sanction the perpetrators and make sure that no such practices against Roma or other women take place anywhere in Europe. We call upon the solidarity of other women and groups to support victims of forced sterilization in their plight.

We acknowledge the political momentum created at the European Union level through the endorsement of the EU Framework for National Roma integration and we call for the concerns of Romani women to be effectively mainstreamed throughout the priorities outlined by the EU Framework but also addressed separately as appropriate.

We acknowledge a need for independent Roma women's movement which enables a roadmap for community development with a strong human rights approach.

Going forward, we want to work together in defining a European Romani Women's Strategy endorsed by governments throughout Council of Europe Member States and supported by European and international institutions. Focusing on the multiple and intersectional discrimination Romani women are confronted with, is essential in the

struggle to integrate Roma, promote and protect equality and non discrimination as well as supports democratic societies.

We are determined to start a political process for Romani women's empowerment and we will rely on governments, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders to commit and provide mechanisms for developing a European Romani women's Strategy.