

32nd SESSION

CG32(2017)24

16 March 2017

Declaration of mayors and elected local and regional representatives of Council of Europe member States against anti-Gypsyism

Current Affairs Committee

Proposed for endorsement by the Congress by Congress Spokesperson on Roma Issues John Warmisham, United Kingdom (L, SOC) and the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues, Valeriu Nicolae

**DECLARATION OF MAYORS AND ELECTED LOCAL AND REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES
OF COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEMBER STATES
AGAINST ANTI-GYPSYISM**

I, AS MAYOR / ELECTED LOCAL AND REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE,

Taking note of the call made by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and by the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Roma Issues to all local elected representatives to take a clear stand against anti-Gypsyism,

Having regard to the international human rights instruments signed and/or ratified by Council of Europe member States, in particular the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and its Protocols, the (Revised) European Social Charter, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Declaration and Plan of Action on combating racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance ("Vienna Declaration") adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, to the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma (2010) and the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers¹ by the Council of Europe;

Having regard to Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which defines racial discrimination as "[...] any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life [...]";

Taking into consideration General Policy Recommendation (2011) no. 13 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on combating anti-Gypsyism and the discrimination against Roma;

Having regard to Resolution 333 (2011) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on Roma inclusion as a challenge for local and regional authorities, to Resolution 366 (2014) on the empowerment of Roma youth through participation, to Resolution 403 (2016) on the situation of Roma and Travellers in the context of rising extremism, xenophobia and the refugee crisis in Europe and to the Final Declaration of the Summit of Mayors (2011);

Recognising that anti-Gypsyism is a specific form of racism;

Bearing in mind that, according to these international human rights instruments, political freedoms must not be allowed to be abused to exploit, cause, or initiate prejudice on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin or nationality or for the purpose of seeking to gain the sympathy of the electorate for prejudice on such grounds;

¹ The term "Roma and Travellers" is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "Gens du voyage", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

Being aware of the special tasks and responsibilities of local and regional authorities as actors in the democratic political process, providing a platform for and integrating different views into the process of political decision-making, thereby enabling society to resolve conflicts of interest and of opinion between various social groups through dialogue rather than through opting out and conflict; and selecting representatives at various levels for active participation in the political process;

Convinced that the representation of ethnic minority groups, especially Roma and Travellers, in the political process is an integral part of the democratic process, since political parties are, or should strive to be, a reflection of society;

COMMIT MYSELF TO:

- **defending** human rights and democratic principles and to reject all forms of discrimination, violence, harassment, incitement to hatred and hate speech against Roma and Travellers and any other form of anti-Gypsyism;
- **refusing** to display, to publish or to have published, to distribute or to endorse in any way views and positions which stir up or incite, or may reasonably be expected to stir up or to incite, hostility or division between people of different ethnic or national origins, and to deal firmly with any anti-Roma and anti-Traveller sentiments and behaviour within our own ranks;
- **refraining from** any forms of political alliance or co-operation at all levels with any political parties or local and regional authorities which incite or attempt to stir up racial or ethnic prejudices and racial hatred;
- **striving for** the fair representation of Roma and Travellers at all levels of democracy with a special responsibility for the head of the local and regional authority to stimulate and support the recruitment of candidates from these groups for political functions at local and regional level;
- **further pledging** to take appropriate action to ensure that all persons working for local or regional authorities are aware of and will act at all times in accordance with the above principles.

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Municipality/Region:

Country:

Mayor/ Elected local or regional representative _____

Date:

Signature: _____

Also available online under:

<http://www.roma-alliance.org/en/page/106-resources.html> (Follow the instructions)