

## **European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day – 2 August**

### **Speech Aurora Ailincăi (4 minutes)**

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur Revel, Président du Comité des délégués des Ministres,

Excellences,

Mesdames et Messieurs / Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

When we gather here today to commemorate the Roma Holocaust, three words come to mind.

### **Recognition. Remembrance. Education.**

They may sound simple, but together they answer a fundamental question: **whose history do we choose to remember?**

Every year, on **2 August**, we honour the memory of the nearly **3,000 Roma and Sinti women, men and children** murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau on this day in 1944.

For many years, this tragedy remained largely absent from Europe's collective memory. It took decades before the Roma Holocaust received the recognition it deserved. And even today, too many people know little about it.

So we have to ask ourselves an uncomfortable question:

## **Why has this history remained so invisible for so long?**

Part of the answer is simple, and difficult at the same time.

Because discrimination did not end with the Holocaust.

When prejudice continues in the present, it becomes easier to neglect the past. And when the past is neglected, it becomes harder to challenge discrimination today. This is how a cycle of invisibility and exclusion is allowed to continue.

This is why remembrance matters.

First, it is about **recognition**. Recognising the Roma Holocaust restores dignity to those who were denied it. It reminds us that Roma history is not a footnote. It is part of European history.

Second, it is about **understanding**. Hatred does not appear overnight. It grows through stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and the acceptance that some people matter less than others.

And third, it is about **prevention**.

The lessons of the Holocaust are not only lessons about the past. They help us recognise the warning signs we still see today: racism, antigypsyism, disinformation, political polarisation and growing intolerance.

As Holocaust survivor **Elie Wiesel** reminded us, *"The opposite of love is not hate, it is indifference."* We cannot allow indifference to become normal.

This is also why the Secretary General has called for a **New Democratic Pact for Europe**. Democracy depends not only on institutions. It depends on trust, equal rights and equal participation and the certainty that everyone belongs. Remembering the Roma Holocaust is part of protecting those values.

Memory, however, is not enough on its own.

It has to be passed on.

That is why education is so important.

At the Council of Europe, we work with governments, teachers, historians, museums and Roma communities to make sure that the history of the Roma Holocaust is taught, that places of remembrance and survivors' testimonies are preserved, and that Holocaust denial and distortion are challenged. This commitment continues through our **Strategy for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2026–2030**, because remembrance and education are among the strongest tools we have to prevent discrimination and build more inclusive societies.

Only a few weeks ago, during the Council of Europe's **No Hate Speech Week** and the **Hack the Hate Democracy Hackathon**, we discussed how to respond to hatred before it turns into discrimination and violence. The message was simple: building inclusive

societies starts with knowledge, dialogue and respect for human dignity. Remembering the Roma Holocaust is part of that same effort.

At the end of the day, this is not only about history.

It is about the kind of Europe we want to build.

A Europe that recognises all its histories is a Europe that can better protect all its people.

Remembering is not only about honouring those who were lost.

It is about the responsibility we carry today and the future we choose to build together.

Thank you.