21/07/2021

**Statement of Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe**

**For European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, 2 August 2021**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

***Commemoration – Remembrance – Vigilance***

Strasbourg, 2 August 2021.

This year, and every year, it is important to pay tribute to the thousands of Roma men, women and children murdered in the extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau on the night of 2 August 1944 and to the hundreds of thousands of Roma who perished in the Roma Holocaust at the hands of the Nazi regime and its allies.

Today, Europe must learn from the past so that, together, we can fight antigypsyism in the present.

It is a good sign that more European countries now formally recognise European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day. This is important for transmitting remembrance down the generations.

But while the Roma of Europe today face no threat of genocide, they continue to encounter intimidation and aggression, as we have further seen in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, where many have been scapegoated and even attacked.

And the old prejudices of the past find their voice today in hate speech against Roma in social media.

So, while remembrance is important, other actions are required too.

Fighting discrimination, racism and antigypsyism is a priority for the Council of Europe.

Because only when Roma and Travellers’ fundamental, legal rights are respected will members of those communities be able to live as equal members of society, free from fear and stigmatisation, as every individual should.

More than this, last year our Committee of Ministers adopted a Recommendation to include the history of Roma and Travellers in school curricula and materials. This enables young Europeans to know and appreciate Roma art, music, and story-telling, and religious and cultural traditions – and to celebrate their positive contribution to our shared European story.

To this end, the Council of Europe‘s new **Observatory on History Teaching in Europe also** provides opportunities to reinforce co-operation in the field of history education.

More broadly, I encourage young Europeans to build bridges between the past and the present, to enable a better future. And I invite you to carry the torch of continued commemoration, remembrance and vigilance.