

## **8th session of the Forum on Minority Issues**

### **European Union on Item IV**

Thank very much, Mr Chair, the European Union firmly believes that the equal access to and participation in the criminal justice for persons belonging to minorities is an essential aspect in promoting and protecting the rights of vulnerable parts of a society. As recently reported by the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues Rita Izsak, minorities tend to be overrepresented in pretrial detention throughout the world. At the same time, minorities are often unaware of the availability of legal aid and may not receive equal access to legal aid. While minority victims are entitled to equal access to justice and reparation, these rights are not fulfilled. Multiple forms of discrimination that may further the curtail access to justice can also rise from within the minority communities. Minority women may face multiple stigmas in relation to their ethnical or religious backgrounds, their sex and the nature of the crime to which they were victim. In addressing the discrimination, the criminal justice system, this gender aspect must be duly considered. The European Union also welcomes drafts recommendations on minorities and policing and on access to justice for minority victims. The EU supports the dissemination and application of the recommendations on policing in multi-ethnic societies of the OEC of national minorities of the year 2006. Mr Chair, where possible, discrimination should be prevented from the beginning through training, through community engagement, through enhanced diversity throughout the system, and through independent oversight and accountability mechanisms. The EU is a good example on this regard, the EU engages in awareness raising and cooperates closely with the civil society. It also coordinates national policies by means of common objectives. And the EU's structural fund serve as a tool to implement the national programmes and plans. The Roma are of particular concern to the European Union and (...) here the ten common principles for Roma inclusion and the EU framework for National Roma Integration strategy up to 2020 provide guidance for the design and the implementation of successful policies.

Thank you very much.