

## **Geneva, November, 24-25 2016, Forum on Minorities Issues**

**Dear Mr. Chair,** Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Kristina Raducan, I am a young Roma woman from Moldova and Minority Fellow of this year within the OHCHR. Luckily, I had an equal start in life and access to qualitative education. Unfortunately, this is not the case for thousands of Roma children all around Europe who are facing discrimination and do not have access to education.

But today I would like to bring to your attention to the 2 main issues:

### **1) the effective participation of romani women in politics**

### **2) mainstreaming gender Equality and gender Quality**

During the last years, the world is struggling with more humanitarian crises in a lot of countries due to different reasons: terrorism, wars, natural disasters. Here we can mention about the top humanitarian concerns for 2016: malnutrition from Central African Republic and Yemen, Syrian refugee crisis. Displacement around the world continues to reach record levels, as millions risk their lives for safety. Only in 2015, more than 60 million people were displaced.

There are a lot of discrimination during the humanitarian crisis if you are a resident in your country. But if you are a minority, you can be affected much stronger than country citizens due to ethnic based discrimination. Humanitarian crises usually involve massively people' displacement from one place to another, from one country to another. For example, more than 800,000 people arrived on the shores of Greece by sea in 2015.

In this precarious conditions, women and girls suffer the most due to their roles in the family and society. During the war crisis, women and girls are those ones who are mostly facing different forms of violence, sexual violence continue, they are usually exposed to human trafficking. Also, taking into account the roles women have in their families, as caregivers for children and elder people, they have much more restriction to free circulation and economic empowerment during the crisis. It can be concluded that women from ethnic minorities are one of the most vulnerable groups within the humanitarian concerns.

Roma women are affected by this situation. Roma women in Moldova are affected as well, despite the fact that the statistics show that this country is **under any risk** of being supposed to displacement of refugees from Arabic states, even the fact that this topic is widely discussed in media and in society influence the Roma people. The refugee crisis which affected Europe was used during the Presidential campaign which took place in Moldova on October 30 and November 13, 2016. Accordingly, **Moldova society became very reticent and very frightened towards people representing ethnic minorities**. So, the global situation affected Roma people in Moldova just because they have a different ethnicity than the majority of population from this country. Roma people started to be treated worse than other representatives of ethnic minorities.

In order **to end such practices**, a **multidimensional intervention is required**. This is not only the state obligation to adopt and implement relevant policies to stop and prevent ethnic based discrimination, but also other actors should be involved in order to ensure a proper and wide awareness among the whole society, as media, academia, civil society, local public administration, and ordinary people.

This result can be achieved faster if women representing ethnic minorities, as Roma women, **are empowered to enter into politics** and decision making. This affirmation is also stipulated in Concluding Observations on the third periodic report of the Republic of Moldova of Human Right Committee (Adopted by the Committee at its 118<sup>th</sup> session (17 October – 4 November 2016). Thus, according to Paras 13 and 14, while welcoming the measures adopted by the State party to promote gender equality, including legislative initiatives to establish a mandatory 40% quota of female candidates on the lists of political parties, the **Committee remains concerned** that women remain underrepresented in Parliament and in decision-making positions within the government.

As a Committee's Recommendation, the **State party should intensify** its efforts to address the root causes that prevent women from participating in public and political life, particularly in decision-making positions, and undertake

awareness-raising and capacity-building campaigns on the importance of full and non-discriminatory participation of women in all aspects of public and political life.

**It is time for women** to be better represented in politics and decision making. It is well-known that during crisis situations, women are those who have the hardest mission: to take the control over the problem and address it. Having an equal representation of all genders in decision making will contribute to find better and **innovative** solutions **to stop the conflicts**, reduce poverty and focus more on social fields.

The Roma in Moldova are among those most vulnerable to discrimination or exclusion. We face a higher risk of marginalization *inter alia* as a result of our under-representation in **decision-making**, high levels of **illiteracy** and **unemployment** and the **existence of social stigma** and **negative prejudices**. A number of tens of rural Romani slums exist, many characterized by extremely substandard infrastructure development, as well as by isolation from the local authorities responsible for their governance.

Me, as the representative of Moldovan civil society in general and Romani woman in particular, **1) advocate** for more women in politics and decision making (50/50), **2) lobby for ratification** of Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, reducing discrimination towards women from vulnerable groups, and **3) mainstreaming gender equality** within all projects implemented by CSOs (civil society organizations) and development partners.

**I urge all of you** to collaborate for **gender Quality**, to have exchange of experience and of good practices, to share our knowledge and best results. In this sense, we will be able to spend more time for advocacy than for learning the lessons. Having a strong Civil Society in Moldova, we achieved to empower women, to promote gender equality and to have better representation of women in decision making than other ex-soviet counties.

Taking into account all this factors, **I kindly ask ALL relevant duty-bearers** to support the boost of Roma women in politics and decision making. (In 2015 a step forward was made by electing **two Roma women** in local councils, but this is not enough for a country which has a Roma population of most that 100,000 people). I'm asking you to help **ME** in my advocacy to reach an **equitable** representation of Roma women in politics.

We, as civil society, play a significant role in gender equality promotion, because we represent not only concrete groups of people, we voice the needs of grassroots and make them heard in front of relevant stakeholders. We have to consolidate our efforts and establish regional and international clusters of civil society representatives. Being unified, we would have more power to influence our Governments to adopt reforms and to convince our countrymen to accept changes.

**Let's make together our societies a safe and equal place for all of us!**

Thank you.