

**Item 2. Root causes and consequences of statelessness affecting minorities:
preventing statelessness through a human rights approach**

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Thank you, madam Chair.

I speak on behalf of the Roma Women Fund "Chiricli" that assists vulnerable Roma and advocates for their inclusion into Ukrainian society.

I would like to address the causes and consequences of access to the right to nationality within the existing policy framework for integration of Roma in Ukraine.

It is estimated that up to 400 000 Roma reside in Ukraine out of which nearly 17% remain undocumented. Although the State authorities have acknowledged the lack of personal documents as a barrier to Roma integration, more concrete actions are needed. Namely a simplified procedure for obtaining personal documents has to be introduced, eliminating burdensome administrative procedures and consequently making the right to nationality more accessible, to Roma.

Ukrainian NGOs have been rendering support to those living without documents to acquire them, and throughout this process a number of systematic obstacles were identified. They include administrative barriers, low level of awareness over administrative procedures amongst Roma, disadvantaged socio-economic situation, and, yet again, discrimination as both a cause and consequence, of a lack of necessary documentation and vulnerability to statelessness.

Given the rise of violence against Roma by far-right radical groups that took place in different regions of Ukraine this year, it is worth noting that many of victims did not possess any personal documents and resided in informal settlements. Not by virtue of choice, but because of lack of opportunities. The lack of personal documents makes Roma increasingly vulnerable and easy targets for violence and aggression and brings challenges of related to restitution and social assistance of victims.

Ukraine must make a firm commitment to tackling discrimination, poverty, alongside access to personal documentation of Roma, as it is an integral prerequisite to effective integration, security and full realisation of economic, social and political rights of Roma communities across the country.

Recommendations:

To Ukrainian authorities:

- To develop annual local action plans for implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy, within the process of decentralization, with the purpose of mapping the numbers of Roma population and tackling the lack of personal documents;
- To maintain strong partnership with the UNHCR and OSCE/ODIHR and follow-up

on the agreed steps between State institutions to implement the set of recommendations enshrined in the 2017 Odesa Declaration on overcoming obstacles in accessing personal documents by Roma in Ukraine, including by means of establishing a co-ordination body/technical working group in order to simplify and accelerate access to personal documents for Roma and other vulnerable groups in similar situation;

- To strengthen cooperation between State institutions and civil society, in particular between the regional departments of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine and State migration service of Ukraine, local communities and civil society to identify Roma without personal documents and facilitate their swift registration.

To UN agencies:

- To OHCHR in Ukraine - to closely monitor the impact of lack of personal documents on access to social, economic, political rights of Roma in the context of increasing intolerance and violence.