

Thank you, Ms. Chairperson,

Our Foundation has observed with concern how hate speech through social media has increased in recent years. This in turn has contributed to the rise of hate crimes against minorities who often feel lack of effective protection from Administrations at many levels.

In Europe, we are concerned about how this is affecting the Roma community, who, in addition to facing intimidation, scapegoating and hate speech on social media, are now also target of rumours in relation to the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. Also preoccupying are the contexts of Poland, Hungary and Spain where hate speech is often promoted by politicians in the mainstream media and on social media, disinforming and misinforming with the aim of spreading racism and intolerance.

Politically motivated hate speech is a menace to democratic values, peace and social stability. Laws and policies should discourage it.

We believe that diversity and pluralism are important values to be preserved in all societies and should be protected. Therefore, we advise Governments and Global institutions:

- to launch high-visibility media and public awareness campaigns to encourage an inclusive society comprised of many different cultures, languages and religions in order to counter hate speech and intolerance against minorities.
- Governments should make sure that internet, and social media in particular, provide a safe platform, ensuring freedom of expression, and facilitating association, participation and empowerment for members of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. To this end, we recommend the States to put in place surveillance mechanisms and reinforce and facilitate arbitration/mediation procedures to protect the most vulnerable.

Thank you.