



PRESS RELEASE

16th International Steering Committee Meeting June 25-26, 2009 Belgrade, Serbia

Decade Presidency of the Republic of Serbia is over with the 16th International Steering Committee meeting, which is held on 25th-26th June 2009, at the Yugoslavia Hall of the Serbian Palace. The International Steering Committee was ceremonially opened by Mr. Božidar Djelić, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia for European Integration and Mr. Dušan Čaplovič, Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for Knowledge Based Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities, as well as Mr. Svetozar Čiplić, Minister of Human and Minority Rights in the Republic of Serbia.

Government of the Republic of Serbia has been presiding the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 from June 1st 2008 until July 1st 2009.

Priority areas of one-year Serbian Presidency were housing, combating discrimination in education, development of monitoring and evaluation system, development of European Roma Policy and access to EU funds. Focusing on activities in these areas, Serbia has contributed the fulfillment of general goal - the reason to run this international initiative - closing the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society.

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Spain have joined the Decade during the Serbian Presidency, as well as international organizations as UN Habitat and UNHCR. Today, there are twelve member countries in the Decade.

Understanding the importance of launched initiatives and necessity of continuity, Government of the Republic of Serbia is transferring the Presidency to the Slovak Republic suggesting the continuation of conducting the development policies based on principles of equal opportunities, as well as further development of European Roma Platform, which will include the countries of the Western Balkans.

The Slovak Republic is honored to chair the community of states involved in finding the best solution for the Roma inclusion, and in cooperation with the representations of the Decade's Member States, it shall do its best to create an active, vivid and beneficiary year of 2009 -2010.

The Working Group, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Knowledge-Based Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and

Minorities – who is also the National Coordinator of the Decade for the Slovak Republic - has approved the following priorities of the Slovak Decade Presidency Program:

1. Integrated school system and multi-cultural education
2. Roma identity
3. Fifth year of Decade – revision of National Action Plans

The Presidency shall promote the program of Decade itself and increase its publicity among the general public – majority as well as minority - on the significance of inclusion of the Roma in the society.

Belgrade, June 25, 2009