

**Statement by Apolonio Ruiz-Ligero, Vice-governor of the Council of Europe Development Bank, on the occasion of his participation in the II EU ROMA summit meeting.**

The **Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)** is a key instrument of solidarity in Europe.

In every European country, **the Roma minority** is the most disadvantaged group of the population, characterised by the highest unemployment rate, poor health, low education level and insalubrious housing conditions.

The CEB has been actively involved in activities related to the improvement of living conditions of Roma communities over the last thirteen years

It is the CEB's policy to:

- Support the efforts of governments and/or local authorities by means of medium/long-term investment loans on favourable conditions for social integration projects benefiting Roma;
- Promote the participation of Roma in the design and implementation of projects;
- Develop comprehensive programmes for Roma including education, housing, health and job creation.

Through the use of loans, grants and technical assistance, the CEB has channelled more than **€ 22 million** to Roma projects in **Bulgaria, Spain, Hungary, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia**. It has a proven record of collaboration with managing authorities of member states in co-financing programs for Roma inclusion with EU funds, as well as with the **World Bank** and other specialised international agencies.

The CEB is the sole European IFI with a specific social mandate that includes the inclusion of Roma and other minorities.

The CEB welcomes the conclusions of the II EU Roma high level meeting in Cordoba and it will continue to support these initiatives in accordance with its mission, operational tools, financial possibilities, and in co-operation with all interested parties.

Cordoba, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2010.