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Your Excellencies, Chairwoman, Ministers, Friends, Colleagues.

I would like to wholeheartedly thank the Government of Spain for hosting the summit, our colleagues from the European Commission and the Council of Europe for persistently pushing the issue, the representatives of Roma civil society for their energy and enthusiasm, and the national governments of the Decade countries for their constructive attitude. I particularly honored to be on this panel with Mr. Soros to whom I would like to say here today that I really think Eastern Europe would look different without his personal efforts.

It is hard to follow this large panel and much has been said and I will try to make reference to these words rather than repeat them.

After briefly introducing myself and the United Nations organisation's work, I would focus on a few seemingly simple messages: the first one is that Roma inclusion in Europe is an extraordinarily complex task involving both development and human rights challenges; second, this task will take time, this has already been mentioned today but I do think it has to be underscored; and finally to ensure that we do move forward over this long haul, and as fast as we would like, will require a very specific and disciplined engagement and dialogue among all participants in the process of advancement of the Roma condition and will require a disciplined and recurrent discussion of what we are doing, what we are accomplishing and what we are not accomplishing, and how to move forward.

As mentioned, I am the Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe and Central Asia of the United Nations Development Programme, but today here I also represent my sister agencies – the entire United Nations Development Group in Europe and CIS. Our mandate is to promote and support human development —a broad understanding of development that is more than average growth figures. We focus on fighting poverty and exclusion, and support partners—usually governments, central and local, as well as civil society and even include the private sector – in addressing the development challenges that our partners face. The role of UNDP as a coordinating agency brings together also the work of the other agencies such as UNICEF, HCHR, WHO, FAO and others. All of these agencies have recently, I would like to convey this message here today, agreed to work together at the regional level, and not only at the country level which we have been doing until now, to contribute and to reinforce our efforts to support Roma inclusion, and in particular the Roma Inclusion Decade. We do see the Roma Inclusion Decade as a unique endeavor applying the Millennium Development Goals framework to the Roma. And these goals are very specific in reference to poverty, education, health, the position of women and children, and the environment, all of great importance in reference to the Roma condition as well.

In the case of Roma inclusion, the United Nations assists governments and civil societies in the Decade countries to address issues such as: the capacity of the Decade Secretariats, and the municipalities that include sizeable Roma minorities, to identify development priorities and plan, as well as implement those plans. We also provide specialized expertise in addressing the education, children rights, citizen participation and other issues. In providing this expertise, we use and rely on our expertise collected from similar work throughout the world. In particular in this region we work with some twenty countries outside the European

Union but we are also building a new partnership with new Member States based on our past cooperation and often this new partnership involves a focus on Roma issues.

Now let me reflect a little on how we see the results and accomplishments of the Roma Inclusion Decade thus far. I want to talk about this because I have heard some tones of disappointment with the accomplishments. Well, I would like to say that if this is so, we need to ask ourselves also what was the realism of our expectations at the outset because let me assure you that the accomplishments of the Roma Decade so far are significant. This is borne out by the composition and the themes on the agenda of this meeting today; this is borne out by yesterday's European Commission policy communication on Roma issues; this is borne out by Miss Reading's words earlier today. All of these are telling us that the Decade so far has really succeeded in putting the Roma agenda in the centre of Europe's attention. The awareness work at the top of the pyramid has got somewhere, and this is an important accomplishment. Furthermore, the decision of the European High Court to explicitly denying the segregation of Roma students in education is another landmark accomplishment this year. We have national secretariats supporting the Roma Decade, focalpointships, Ministries created to support these efforts. All of this did not exist before. And I must say in many of the Decade countries, the Roma inclusion Decade has become a household term. I do not say that it has yet come close to accomplishing the change in mindsets necessary, but it is a very important and critical beginning.

Progress is also evident in the content and quality of this awareness. It is reflected in the discourse that we are having today. Five to eight years ago we would have been talking about awakening the political will of the governments to do something. Today we are talking about how exactly, how best to go about accomplishing something. And there is a growing body of efforts and experience that we can use to base this discourse on.

Could more have been accomplished? Yes, surely. We should beware of low expectations – as they are always a safe route to stagnation. However, excessively high expectations can also be our enemy – they lead to disappointment and inconsistency where perseverance, commitment, doggedness in pursuit is necessary. The progress needs to be measured against the challenges, and their size and complexity.

Now these challenges are large. The first issue that I want to underscore is that it is now well accepted that Roma inclusion is both a development and a human rights challenge. The complexity of the tools, instruments and aspects that need to be addressed cannot be illustrated better than through the detailed presentation of Ms. Jaroka. However, let me underscore the link between their being a development and human rights challenge. Let us take the following daring illustration: let us imagine that overnight all prejudice and all deliberate discrimination against the Roma disappeared. Think about it. The next day, the Roma would still be excluded and poor and it would still be a lengthy battle ahead of us to wrest them away from the vicious cycle of exclusion. So we face the challenge of eliminating prejudice and discrimination, the challenge of changing hearts and minds, but we also face the challenge of filling the framework of rights with the substance of economic opportunities.

Therefore, even if this was only a development challenge, it would require a lot of time – the second point I want to make – to truly overcome Roma exclusion. However, the Roma development effort is actually even more complex not only because the human rights and discrimination issues are added to the development challenges but also because they bring

great sensitivities and a complexity to the entire discourse, to the engagement of the parties that we are here today, in working together and in thinking and identifying the policies how best to bring about the results. In the traditional development case, a government is ultimately accountable to its constituency one way or another, and it will pay if there is not some kind of progress. In our case, much depends on our ability to agree whether the effort is roughly moving in the right direction or not. This is not easy and we can see this from the fact that we needed – and very much welcomed – the adoption of the ten common basic principles of Roma inclusion in our work, last April. Yes, the adoption of the principles was both a benchmark of the complexity of the issue at hand, but it has also provided an important framework for the discipline of engagement in our joint work and in its progress.

Now at this point I would like to join Mr. Soros, as well as the European Parliament, in calling for a European Roma strategy. In addition I would like to say that this strategy, as every other European strategy, will need to have a monitoring and evaluation, a results evaluation framework. It is a critical aspect of the discipline of our engagement and of our work together in improving the Roma condition to have a systematic reliance on evidence and data. The United Nations is particularly involved in, and committed, to the evaluation of policies for the advancement of Roma, to the measurement of the results of these policies and more broadly to the evaluation of the Roma condition. Information needs to be collected and monitoring of results has to be continuously gathered and fed back into our efforts so that we can correct course, especially because of complexity the task at hand. We want real change, but we need to know when there is real change, and that cannot be done without information.

Now, our efforts have matured to the point where we can, and owe it to ourselves to do that much more systematically. There are serious obstacles, and Mr. Ahlers has made reference to them. However, a disciplined and rigorous data collection has to be our commitment. Let me add that rigorous data collection and evaluation is very costly and sometimes simply impossible, and while we have to be committed to do it, we also have to be committed to not allow it to become an excuse for inaction or paralysis. Therefore I would like to hear proposed three principles of this data collection effort:

First, it has to be, as all of our Roma work, *inclusive*; it has to include the Roma, and be done with the Roma, not for the Roma, or for policymakers alone.

Second, it has to be *open-minded* – we cannot allow that our hearts, and our desires, and our hopes blind us to the facts when they are not what we want them to be. Nor should we allow our sensitivities to confuse a fair evaluation of what works and what does not work. If a first best policy is not delivering results, let us look to a second best policy (in economic parlance) – something which may still bring results, although maybe not as perfect as the ones we desired.

Third, when the data evaluation cannot be rigorous, we should not be paralyzed and we should not give up, but we should still strive to be as objective as possible. We can be, and we have to be creative – we have to also build mechanisms of trust and objectivity – by bringing interested and informed parties into looking at what we do and whether the results that are being accomplished are those desired, even if sometimes we cannot measure them perfectly.

In this context, I would also like to call attention to the fact that now at the middle of the Decade, following the benchmark exercise that was done at the beginning of the decade in particular by the United Nations Development Programme, we should do a mid way evaluation exercise that would give us a next picture of the socio-economic conditions of the Roma population. There should be, then, another exercise at the end of the Decade, and, more importantly, I would like to call on the European Union, and the European Commission in particular, to indeed not to allow these efforts to be one-off efforts as they have been until now, but to actually establish a continuing monitoring framework.

In conclusion, the United Nations family of agencies reaffirms its commitment to the advancement of the Roma condition, to the attainment of the Decade development and human rights goals, to the attainment of Roma inclusion in Europe in the broadest sense of the word. In this effort, mistakes will be made and resources will sometimes be wasted, as happens in all development efforts, but if we keep our minds open and if we learn from our efforts and from each other, for every few that undertakings whose results might be underwhelming, there will be the one undertaking that takes us forward, and ultimately to success.

Thank you very much.