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Statement submitted by Roma Centre for Social Intervention and Studies, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2011/100.

Statement*

One of the most critical issues in the field of education in Romania is school segregation on ethnic grounds for Roma children. A 2011 research conducted by the Roma Centre for Social Intervention and Studies (Romani CRISS) and the United Nations Children's Fund indicates that school segregation significantly influences school drop-out rates, emphasizing that this rate is higher in schools where the population of Roma children is over 50 per cent. The issue of segregation was officially acknowledged by the Ministry of Education as a result of lobbying by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In 2007, a Ministerial Order prohibiting school segregation of Roma children was adopted. The same 2011 research indicates that 76.6 per cent of the interviewed Roma are unaware that school segregation is prohibited by Ministerial Order.

In spite of the official position, there are still identified segregated schools, classes or even segregation cases in special education schools. Roma students are placed in schools for children with special educational needs with no medical justification. Most often, Roma children were not enrolled in kindergarten before going to school or do not speak Romanian as their mother tongue. As a result of the low effectiveness of the Ministerial Order, weak implementation and non-existent monitoring system, NGOs have provided comments and proposals to the draft education law. The law was adopted on 10 January 2011 and includes no provisions for prohibiting segregation. Not only were the efforts of civil society not considered but the obligations that the Ministry of Education committed to in 2007 were not met until recently. Order 1540/2007 included a provision for creating a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Order and for creating desegregation plans, a mechanism which was not created until recently despite lobbying by NGOs. Furthermore, according to the Order, the annual report on the status of education issued by the Ministry of Education was supposed to include a chapter on the implementation of the Order. This obligation was also not met.

Bearing in mind that international organizations, including the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, condemn segregation, we strongly believe that having a provision prohibiting segregation within the most important normative act in the field of education is crucial for respecting international human rights standards. Therefore, we urge the Romanian Ministry of Education to comply with the obligations set forth by existing legislation to combat the segregation of Roma children. We urge the Romanian Ministry of Education to create a monitoring mechanism to identify the education facilities that practice this form of discrimination and to work on desegregation plans and ensure their implementation.

We call upon the Romanian Ministry of Education to consider making an amendment to Law No. 1/2011 on national education by including a provision prohibiting school segregation of Roma children. This measure is crucial to ensure the effectiveness of the Government's measures to combat school segregation.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.