

1. Bibija Roma Women Center (Bibija) welcomes the opportunity provided by the Office of the High Commissioner to submit a report to be considered as an input to the Universal Periodic Review of Serbia.
2. According to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 of June 2007, States are encouraged to prepare the information they submit “through a broad consultation process at the national level with all relevant stakeholders” (paragraph 15(a)). Bibija notes that to date this consultation process has not taken place.
3. Bibija is increasingly concerned that numerous Roma in Serbia remain affected by a lack of personal documents. At least 80 percent of the Roma population in Serbia live in non-legal settlements, which impedes them to register a permanent residence address. Without a permanent address, they cannot obtain personal documents (ID). The lack of ID leads to the inability to access other documents. The inability of Roma to access basic personal documents leads to situation where access to services crucial to the realisation of fundamental rights and freedoms are threatened and, in many cases denied. The draft Action Plan, developed under the frame of Decade of Roma Inclusion, to tackle the problem, has not been adopted by the Government of Serbia.
4. Bibija recommends the Human Rights Council to urge Serbia to adopt the Action Plan and take further steps to solving the problem of lack of personal documents.
5. Bibija expresses its deep concern that the Government does not take action on the issue of racial segregation of Roma in the field of education. Large percentage of Roma children are placed in schools for the mentally disabled. The enrolment of Roma children in such schools is indirectly supported by State with special financial support for families where children attend such schools. Moreover, 75 percent of Roma children in Serbia are not enrolled in any schools. Roma girls are in an even more vulnerable position. Elementary school drop outs of many Roma girls happen with a silent permission of the educational staff and school directors.
6. Bibija recommends the Human Rights Council to urge Serbia to assess the segregation of Roma in the field of education and take action to ensure equal access to education for Roma.
7. Bibija is concerned with the lack of promotion of gender equality in Serbia which is also stated in the recommendation of Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to the State. Serbia now has established mechanisms for monitoring women’s human rights at the national (Sector for Gender Equality under the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare) and provincial level (Provincial Secretariat for Work, Employment and Gender Equality in Vojvodina). Yet, the adoption of the Gender Equality Law is still pending for the past three years together with the National Plan of Action for the Improvement of Women’s Position in Serbia, an operational instrument for the implementation of CEDAW. Bibija is particularly concerned with the lack of consideration for gender equality in strategies

and action plans adopted both at the national and local level. Often these strategies, such as the Strategy for Youth do not consider the specific position of girls in society, especially of girls from minority groups.

8. Bibija recommends the Human Rights Council to urge Serbia to update and adopt the Gender Equality Law and implement the National Plan of Action, but also to urge Serbia to adopt Action Plan for Specific Position of Roma Women in the frame of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.
9. Bibija is concerned that the right to the highest attainable health is not guaranteed to all persons. A significant number of Roma women do not have medical insurance and therefore, do not have access to medical care. Pregnant women, IDPs from Kosovo whose personal documents have been destroyed and Roma women deported from Western Europe on the basis of the Readmission Agreement with host countries are in a particularly vulnerable position.
10. Bibija recommends the Human Rights Council to urge Serbia to strive towards the realisation of the highest attainable standard of health to all people within its territory.
11. Bibija expresses its deep concern that Serbia has not yet adopted a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. Moreover, it does not have a valid law that protects the rights of national minorities. The law on Protection of National Minorities once adopted at the federal level during the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro is no longer in force and comparable legislation has not been adopted in Serbia.
12. Bibija is deeply concerned with the growing number of groups and organisations spreading intolerance, promoting racial hate and often committing racially motivated attacks on minorities. Such attacks have been sanctioned by the Police, but only as public disturbances with minimal punishments. Bibija is concerned that such climate of impunity will contribute to the spread of nationalistic and racist ideas and attacks.
13. Bibija recommends the Human Rights Council to urge Serbia to adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law and the law on protection of national minorities and to pay adequate attention to the problem of racism and take effective measures to ensure the elimination of racism.
14. Bibija is increasingly concerned that a number of demonstrations have been banned and the freedom of assembly of certain groups have been denied by the authorities. The request of peaceful demonstration of sexual minorities have been denied. The explanation given by the police was that such event would provoke the public. The police has a duty to protect such demonstrations and the fact that some people hold homophobic views is no reason to limit freedom of expression and freedom of assembly of others.
15. Bibija recommends the Human Rights Council to call upon Serbia to cease the banning of such activities as they undermine the right to the freedom of expression

and assembly and to recognise the harm caused by homophobia and prejudice and promote the values of tolerance and inclusion.