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PANEL I

**Key policy initiatives to eliminate all forms of discrimination and
violence against the girl child**

Written statement*
submitted by

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations

number of early age marriages has decreased even more. In a research sample used by the

Roma. According to the follow up research in 2003, these trends have not changed⁵. The Czech Republic is not the only place where Romani children are disproportionately overrepresented in schools or classes for the mentally handicapped. The same trend can be observed in Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria but even in Western countries as well. Also, observable in these countries is the increasing territorial segregation of the Roma, which leads to the “ghettoized” schools, where there are more than 80 percent of Roma students. Romani children in these “segregated” schools but also in the schools for mentally handicapped are provided substandard education. All this causes a serious disadvantage for them and disqualifies Romani children from admission to certain secondary and tertiary educational institutions.

13. In addition, according to NGO reports, there are many Romani children who never have any opportunity to attend school at all. In some places such as Romania and the South Eastern European countries, they have been blocked from enrolling in schools by officials since these Romani children lack residence permits as well as birth certificates. Similar administrative obstacles for the enrollment of Romani children in schools have been documented in France. The non-governmental organization Socio-Educative Tzigane d’Aquitaine (USETA) reported that during the 1999-2000 academic school-year, Romani children were refused either in pre-school, elementary or secondary schools for various apparently pre-textual reasons: lack of places, lack of teaching materials, and no certificate of schooling to evaluate the academic level of the children. Also, we know from various NGO reports and field notes that many Romani children in Italy live in segregated “camps for nomads” and effectively have no access to the Italian school system. I could continue with the list of countries where Roma children face similar exclusion from the educational system. Thousands of Romani children live in total deprivation without prospects and chances to break the vicious circle inherited through generations.

14. It is very unfortunate that we do not have information from all the school research and field notes that illustrate how school discrimination and racial segregation affect Romani girls. The information on educational attainment by gender is scarce. For example, one of the qualitative studies conducted in Bulgaria in 8 settlements illustrated that women were much less likely to have gone to school-29 percent had never gone to school

ignore the structural gendered discrimination against Romani girls? How long do we want to reproduce the subaltern position of Romani women and girls by our institutions? How long do we want to wait to work with Romani women? How long do we want to keep the “third world” conditions of Romani girls in the heart of Europe? Who cares about Romani girls? Do we? Do you? I do!

17. I hope that this occasion will be a starting point of our work to recognize and address