EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

In a few places, there are some glimmers of hope. In Viden, Bulgaria, for example, the Romani organization Drom has led a successful effort to bring 400 Romani children, who previously attended segregated schools, into the mainstream school system. In that instance, the cooperation of local and national authorities, governmental and non-governmental bodies, is paying off.

Unfortunately, too few government leaders demonstrate the courage necessary to address these issues. Some pass the buck, looking to the European Union or the Council of Europe to fix problems that must be tackled, first and foremost, through political leadership at home. Moreover, a number of EU countries have little to teach the applicant countries about tolerance towards Roma. Many OSCE countries—not just the former Communist states—are in need of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, a priority recognized in the 1999 OSCE summit agreement and by the European Commission in the adoption of its “race directive” in June of last year. Regrettably, nearly two years after Bulgaria received praise from many quarters for agreeing to adopt such legislation, the government has yet to take one more step closer to fulfilling its commitment. The Slovak Government’s human rights office, in contrast, has undertaken a serious study of legislative options and may soon have a draft ready for a vote.

In addition, it is imperative that political and civic leaders condemn anti-Roma manifestations in clear and unequivocal terms.

Mr. Speaker, when the Mayor of Csor, Hungary—a publicly elected official—said “the Roma of Zamoly have no place among human beings; just as in the animal world, parasites must be expelled,” I believe it is the responsibility of Hungary’s political leadership to condemn these outrageous slurs. If more leadership was demonstrated, perhaps confidence would have been strengthened and maybe 5,772 Hungarian Roma would not have applied for asylum in Canada over the past three years.

When the Mayor of Usti nad Labem built a wall to segregate Roma from non-Roma, all members of the Czech parliament—not just a paper slim majority of 101 out of 200 MPs—should have voted to condemn it. And when Mayor Sechelariu of Bacau, Romania, announced plans to build a statue of Marshall Antonescu—the World War II dictator who deported 25,000 Roma to Transnistria, where some 19,000 of them perished—Romanian officials, who have pledged to the OSCE community to fight intolerance, should begin at home by ridding their country of every Antonescu statue built on public land.