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Contact: Sarah Miller-Davenport
Mobile: + 1 (917) 855-2091

PRIME MINISTERS ENDORSE DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION, CALLED FOR BY GEORGE SOROS

Budapest, Hungary, July 1, 2003—The governments of Hungary, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovakia today endorsed the launch of the *Decade of Roma Inclusion*, called for by international financier and philanthropist George Soros.

This is the first-ever joint endorsement of a policy on Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. It comes as part of the June 30-July 1 Roma in an Expanding Europe conference focusing on including Roma in the process of carving out minority policy on a local and national level.

The *Decade*, which spans 2005-2015, aims to provide a framework for governments to set their own goals for Roma integration. A complementary Roma Education Fund, initiated by the World Bank, would scale up successful pilot projects to improve Romani education.

The Roma in an Expanding Europe conference, sponsored by the World Bank and George Soros's Open Society Institute and hosted by the government of Hungary, succeeded in garnering support for the *Decade* from the highest level of government in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the European Commission and the Council of Europe, the United Nations Development Program, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and most importantly, Romani leadership.

This support signals a sea change in Roma policy and the political will necessary to change the lives of Roma in Europe.

“The *Decade* represents a comprehensive approach to address the issues that Romani leaders have identified: education, employment, housing, and discrimination,” said Soros. “It marks the first time the highest levels of government and international leadership have come together with the Roma to assist them in determining their own future,” said Soros.