



Laudation in honor of Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance „AMALIPE“:

laureate of the Polish Prize of Sérgio Vieira de Mello (11th edition), the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2002-2003)

Madam Director, Distinguished Laureates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, please allow me to thank Villa Decius for organizing the 11th edition of the Polish Prize of Sérgio Vieira de Mello.

This year, this Prize - in the category of nongovernmental organisations - is awarded to AMALIPE Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance from Bulgaria.

The AMALIPE Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance has been chosen as this year's Laureate of the Polish Prize of Sérgio Vieira de Mello in recognition of the work the organization has been carrying out promoting equal integration of the Roma communities in Bulgaria, thus setting good example for Roma organisations in the whole Europe.

Amalipe strives both to preserve the Roma identity and to modernise the Roma communities, empowering them to access opportunities offered to all people.

By developing civic leadership and strengthening self-organization, Amalipe helps overcoming social exclusion and marginalization of the Roma communities.

An increased participation of Roma in policy-making thanks to advocacy skills developed by Roma organizations translates into better public awareness, better policies, and eventually better access to education, employment, social services or health care.

Support project run by Amalipe are benefiting largely from the support of the EU and the Bulgarian government funds. They are carried out in cooperation with grass-root Roma organizations. Some of them involve a network of schools, attracting communities round school and education, and tackling difficult issues such as high dropout rate of students or early/ forced marriage. Amalipe provides also assistance and help through the Roma Community Support Centers (6) established in different regions of the country.

Amalipe has succeeded in advocating for Roma social and economic integration before national and international institutions, and in particular the EU. The process of Roma inclusion has become not only internal policy matter but a part of the entire European cohesion policy.

This decade has been (2005-2015) called *the Roma inclusion decade* by several European countries with substantial Roma community, who work together with international organisations and NGOs with a view of bettering Roma social inclusion and act against poverty and discrimination. Therefore we are glad to present this award to Roma advocacy organization.

Thanks to the vision and hard work of Amalipe, a disadvantaged ethnic minority is becoming a part of the European social tissue, a piece of the European cultural puzzle, forming unity out of diversity.

Amalipe's dedication to promote and protect Roma's equal right, diversity as well as dignity have visible effects on lives of many people in Europe.

Madam Director, I wish you and the whole organization of Amalipe further success and hope that the Polish Prize of Sérgio Vieira de Mello will serve as valuable support and acknowledgement of your work for the community of Roma people in Bulgaria and Europe.

Elaborated and read by Mariusz Lewicki on behalf of the Panel of Judges of the Polish Prize of Sergio Vieira de Mello, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2002-2003).

