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Honourable President Basescu and Prime Minister Boc,

Noting yesterday's protests in Bucharest organised by the Roma Civic Alliance of Romania, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) would like to express serious concern about anti-Romani speech by senior government officials in Romania, namely Romanian's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Teodor Baconschi.

According to the official Romanian government press release on 11 February 2010, in a meeting with the French Secretary of State, Foreign Minister Baconschi reportedly stated that he considered Romanian Roma to be biologically predisposed to "criminality" based on their ethnicity. Such statements are based on racist stereotypes and negatively influence public perceptions and attitudes towards Roma. Prominent politicians such as Minister Baconschi have a particular duty to refrain from making such statements.

They are illegal under international law, including Article 4(c) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), to which Romania is a party, which states, "States Parties condemn all propaganda and all organizations which are based on ideas or theories of superiority of one race or group of persons of one colour or ethnic origin, or which attempt to justify or promote racial hatred and discrimination in any form, and undertake to adopt immediate and positive measures designed to eradicate all incitement to, or acts of, such discrimination and, to this end, with due regard to the principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the rights expressly set forth in article 5 of this Convention, inter alia: [...] (c) Shall not permit public authorities or public institutions, national or local, to promote or incite racial discrimination."

The ERRC respectfully calls on you to issue an official apology and retraction for the anti-Roma statements made by Minister Baconschi. Furthermore, the ERRC also calls for the removal of Minister Baconschi from his position.

We kindly request that your respective offices provide information about the steps taken in this regard.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Kushen
Managing Director