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## **Keith Whitmore: "Remembrance of the massacre of Roma in 1944 charges us with the duty to eradicate entrenched discrimination against them"**

02.08.2011 – "As we commemorate the night of 2-3 August 1944 during which several thousand Roma were massacred in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, we need to act positively at the grassroots in order to end the discrimination which Roma continue to suffer in Europe," said Keith Whitmore, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

"We must strive, on the ground, at the heart of our towns and regions, against the harmful effects of extremist and racist tendencies. History has taught us how isolated, single discriminatory acts can also take the shape of a "state policy" with the worst outcome. We must therefore develop and encourage practical initiatives to foster Roma inclusion in Europe," he added.

It is to meet this concern that the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is organising for the first time a Summit of Mayors on Roma on 22 September 2011 in Strasbourg (France). The conference will deal essentially with relations between local and regional authorities and Roma communities, the aim being to provide concrete and innovative answers to the problems encountered. In the long term, the idea is to create a framework of information and co-operation for the various field workers.

This Summit is being organised in co-operation with the Council of Europe Secretary General's Special Representative for Roma Issues, in partnership with the City of Strasbourg and the municipal network of the "Strasbourg Club". It will bring together representatives of municipalities and regions, of networks and institutions, as well as organisations and elected representatives of the Roma.

### Summit of Mayors on Roma – 22 September 2011:

Interpretation: The working languages of the Summit will be English, French, German, Russian, Italian and Romani.

Registration: [www.coe.int/roma-summit-registration](http://www.coe.int/roma-summit-registration)

Website : [www.coe.int/roma-summit](http://www.coe.int/roma-summit)

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The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions.

It brings together 318 full and 318 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities.

President of the Congress: Keith Whitmore (United Kingdom, ILDG), President of the Chamber of Regions: Herwig van Staa (Austria, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Paul Frécon (France, SOC)

Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG).