

*International Expert Round Table*  
**PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ROMA  
CULTURAL HERITAGE IN SERBIA**

*Belgrade, 22 May 2010  
Media Center, Terazije 3/II*

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**OPENING REMARKS**

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*by the Professor Dr Takehiro TOGO  
President of the ECPD Academic Council*

*Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*It is my honour to be the chairman of this International Round Table on "PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ROMA CULTURAL HERITAGE IN SERBIA". As a President of the ECPD Academic Council, I have been engaged in the opening of the ECPD International Studies on Romology in Belgrade, and was pleased and honoured to be the signee of the act on its establishment.*

*I feel free to say that I have acted having in mind an ancient philosophical wisdom: Honour is conscious expressed, conscious is the soul of honour"*

*Dear colleagues,*

*Experience through history and science has proved that peace, freedom and mutual help and understanding are the basis of each culturally developed community and individual, with the motto - Nothing human is strange to me.*

*If culture is the standpoint and criteria for humanity, then humanity should be shown and proved, first and foremost, to those who have been the greatest victims of inhumanity and inhumane treatment.*

*The Roma people have been one of the greatest victims of inhumanity, maybe even the greatest.*

*Historical records and documents prove that the Roma people have been viciously persecuted and discriminated and that they together with Jews were planned for the „ultimate solution“, and thus both people became victims of Holocaust during the Second World War.*

*A book published in 1979 in the German language, entitled „Gassed to death in Auschwitz, to date persecuted“ („In Auschwitz vergast, bis heute verfolgt“). Namely, the very title of the book shows that a lesson has not been learnt enough from this outrageous tragedy that befell Europe and the World in the 20th century. This book shows quite assuredly, that the relation towards Roma people is still in contrast to the categorical imperatives of ethics and the ethics of memory, and which casts a shadow on the principles and the intentions of the programme "Memory, Reconciliation and Futurity“, which have preoccupied many countries in Europe and the World.*



*It is the final moment for us to comprehend the meaning and message of one sentence: „Truth is on the side of the least privileged!“ If we wish to convince and assure „on which side the truth lies“, then all that is necessary is to count the number of ghettos in European cities where the Roma people live, which are – as the media often report – and who are in a great number illiterate. Presently, in the time of great scientific and technological development and progress, an illiterate person – figuratively speaking – is like a bird without wings.*

*In my country, Japan, the interest in the Roma people arose in the 80's of the last century. In this respect the leaders were the Museum in Osaka and Kansai University in Osaka, who have organized a number of cultural events and exhibitions and established cooperation with a large number of Roma institutions from European countries and the USA. Cooperation was also established with the Holocaust Museum in Washington, as well as centres on holocaust studies in Brno and Bucharest. A book was also translated into Japanese „Roma in the World“ written by Rajko Djurić who is present here today. Omori Yasuhiro (1943), one of the best known Japanese ethnographers and who does research on the Roma in Europe, has filmed a number of documentary – ethnographic films. His film „My life – Gipsy Manoushes“ of 1985 has received the greatest reward.*

*I expect this Round Table to contribute to better preservation of Roma Culture and Cultural Heritage in Serbia. I believe it will encourage interest in other European and world countries, so that adequate scientific attention would be given to these issues, and that they would in turn be implemented with greater responsibility, both human and governmental.*

