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**ORAL STATEMENT**  
**Item 6:**  
**Consideration of UPR reports: Belarus**

UN Human Rights Council  
46<sup>th</sup> session  
22 February 2021 to 23 March 2021

Madame President,

We are witnessing the most serious civil and political human rights crisis in Belarus' post-independence history, following the widely contested presidential election in August 2020. Protests continue to be violently suppressed and an estimated 30,000 people have been arbitrarily arrested, often by armed, masked, unidentified men, using excessive force.

We urge Belarus to reconsider its rejection of recommendations relating to freedom of peaceful assembly including calling for the immediate cessation of police violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, enforced disappearance and torture and other ill-treatment of peaceful protesters, human rights defenders and journalists<sup>1</sup> as well as recommendations calling for the immediate and unconditional release all those unlawfully detained<sup>2</sup> and urge Belarus to respect this right, including by putting an end to police violence and immediately and unconditionally releasing all those arbitrarily arrested or imprisoned.

Madame President,

At least four protesters have died, and hundreds of detainees have testified to being subjected to or witnessing torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual and gender-based violence. As yet, not a single criminal case has been brought against any law-enforcement officers.

We urge Belarus to reverse its rejection of recommendations to investigate all allegations of torture or other ill-treatment and other human rights violations and to ensure that suspected perpetrators are brought to justice.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/46/5 Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Belarus, 4 January 2021, paragraph 138.105 (Italy), 138.106 (Lichtenstein) 138.107 (Lithuania), 138.108 (Luxembourg), 138.114 (United States of America), 138.132 (Japan), 138.174 (Spain), 138.180 (Norway), 138.196 (Finland).

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/46/5, paragraph 138.105 (Italy), 138.112 (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), 138.125 (Austria), 138.126 (Belgium), 138.127 (Chile), 138.128 (Czech Republic), 138.129 (Estonia), 138.130 (Iceland), 138.131 (Ireland), 138.133 (Ukraine), 138.134 (Lithuania), 138.135 (Luxembourg), 138.136 (Malta), 138.137 (Norway), 138.138 (Poland), 138.139 (United States of America), 138.140 (Sweden).

<sup>3</sup> A/HRC/46/5, paragraph 138.112 (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), 138.113 (Portugal), 138.114 (United States of America), 138.130 (Iceland), 138.189 (Albania), 138.190 (Austria), 138.191 (Costa Rica), 138.194 (Czech Republic), 138.195 (Estonia), 138.198 (Germany), 138.199 (Greece), 138.200 (Italy),

Belarus must investigate all such allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, without delay, in line with their international obligations.

Madame President,

Regrettably, Belarus rejected recommendations to lift restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, including through internet shutdowns, and to end the harassment and criminal prosecution of independent media, civil society and human rights defenders and to bring its relevant legislation in line with international standards.<sup>4</sup>

Hundreds of opposition figures, human rights defenders, journalists, and others expressing dissenting opinions continue to be detained on trumped-up charges or sentenced to prison terms following unfair trials in order to obstruct them from carrying out their work, including the documentation of human rights violations.

We call on Belarus to bring its legislation and practice into line with its international obligations and to immediately and unconditionally release those deprived of their liberty solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Finally, Madame President,

We urge Belarus to implement rejected recommendations to cooperate fully with mandated reporting mechanisms and UN Special Procedures, including to grant them unfettered access to the country.<sup>5</sup> Such cooperation is essential to ensure accountability for the widespread, systemic and egregious violations against dissenting voices currently taking place.

Thank you.

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138.201 (Lichtenstein), 138.202 (Lithuania), 138.204 (Montenegro), 138.205 (New Zealand), 138.206 (North Macedonia), 138.207 (Philippines), 138.208 (Poland), 138.209 (Republic of Korea), 138.210 (Romania), 138.211 (Slovakia).

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/46/5, paragraph 138.149 (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), 138.150 (Portugal), 138.152 (Slovenia), 138.155 (Austria), 138.156 (Canada), 138.158 (Czech Republic), 138.161 (Estonia), 138.163 (France), 138.164 (Greece), 138.166 (Indonesia), 138.168 (Ireland), 138.169 (Mexico), 138.170 (New Zealand), 138.171 (New Zealand).

<sup>5</sup> A/HRC/46/5, paragraph 138.24 (Costa Rica), 138.25 (France), 138.26 (Greece), 138.28 (Ukraine), 138.29 (Luxembourg); 138.30 (Montenegro), 138.39 (Latvia), 138.40 (Lithuania), 138.41 (Ukraine), 138.42 (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), 138.43 (Slovakia).