



## Committee on International Control over the Situation with Human Rights in Belarus

*April 22nd, 2011*

### **STATEMENT of the Steering Council of the Committee on International Control over the Situation with Human Rights in Belarus regarding violations by the Republic of Belarus of the OSCE commitments related to assistance to non-governmental organizations in monitoring conditions in the human dimension**

The participating organizations of the Committee on International Control over the Situation with Human Rights in Belarus are concerned about the situation regarding representatives of the International Observation Mission, established under the auspices of the Committee. These concerns are especially relevant in light of recent invocation of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism with regard to Belarus and also in the light of statements of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus containing claims that Belarus strictly observes all OSCE commitments in the human dimension.

On March 16, 2011 the Head of the International Observation Mission, citizen of the Russian Federation Andrey Yurov was detained by the police and taken to the police department of the Sovetsky district, where he spent the entire night. There was an attempt of a criminal charge of illegal border crossing to be brought against him. In the morning of March 17th, 2011, an order was issued to dismiss the criminal case with instructions for him to leave the territory of Belarus in the next 24 hours. Mr. Yurov was also notified that his name was included in the "List of persons whose entry into the Republic of Belarus is prohibited or undesirable" until 02/15/2013.

Earlier, on March 9th, 2011, the same situation occurred with regard to a Ukrainian human rights defender going to Belarus to work in the International Observation Mission, Maxim Kitsyuk.

Later, on April 20th, 2011 Marina Tsapok, the information assistant to the Representative of the International Observation Mission, citizen of the Ukraine, was detained while crossing the Ukrainian-Belarus border because of the fact that her name was found to have been included in the aforementioned list.

On the next day, on April 21st, one more Ukrainian human rights activist, Mikhail Kamenev, who also was traveling to the Mission, was denied entry to Belarus.

Human rights defenders Andrey Yurov, Maxim Kitsyuk, Marina Tsapok and Mikhail Kamenev, while being in the territory of Belarus, were acting openly and were monitoring the compliance of the Republic of Belarus with its international human rights commitments in accordance with the UN and OSCE standards on human rights activities.

In line with these commitments, reaffirmed at the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the OSCE participating States, held in Astana on December 1-2, 2010, human rights issues are the subject of direct and legitimate concern to all the OSCE

participating States and international civil society and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned.

Such actions could be interpreted as directly impeding the International Observation Mission.

We consider that the actions taken by the Belarusian authorities in relation to human rights defenders demonstrate disregard of international OSCE commitments of the Republic of Belarus, in particular, these actions are in direct contravention of the provisions of the 1991 OSCE Moscow Document (primarily in terms of paragraphs 43.2, 43.3).

**We believe that the Republic of Belarus can demonstrate real commitment to the OSCE principles and obligations only if it takes the following actions:**

- immediately lift the ban on entry of representatives of the International Observation Mission and provide assistance to the Committee on International Control over the Situation with Human Rights in Belarus in monitoring human dimension conditions and verifying compliance of Belarus with relevant international obligations;

- remove active international human rights defenders, particularly representatives of the International Observation Mission Andrey Yurov, Maxim Kitsyuk, Marina Tsapok and Mihail Kameniev from the "List of persons whose entry into the Republic of Belarus is prohibited or undesirable";

- make a formal apology for detaining aforementioned human rights defenders and for the time they spent in places of detention.

We also encourage other civic organizations from the OSCE participating States, as well as international non-governmental organizations to join these demands and forward them to the authorities of the Republic of Belarus.