

Civil Society Organizations Welcome a New OSCE Initiative on Human Rights in Belarus

11 April, 2011. Leading civil society organizations from Central and Eastern Europe and other countries of the OSCE region welcome launch of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism towards Belarus. An official letter sent by representatives of governments of 14 OSCE participating states to the representative of Belarus to the OSCE¹ says: "Our view is that a particularly serious threat to the fulfillment of the provisions of the OSCE human dimension has arisen in Belarus". The authors of the letter insist on establishment, in accordance with the OSCE Moscow Mechanism, of a mission of independent observers to study the situation within the country after 19 December 2010. The mission would produce an independent and objective report based on facts, with recommendations and advice on improvement of the situation with observation of OSCE commitments by Belarus.

Members of the Committee of International Control over the Human Rights Situation in Belarus, representing civil society organizations from many OSCE countries, support this important decision, as it is aimed at elaboration of objective assessment of the situation in this country and provides a basis for dialogue with Belarusian authorities. This decision of OSCE participating states is to a certain extent a reaction to the position of civil society. In January 2011 more than 130 leading non-governmental organizations from majority of OSCE countries appealed to the OSCE participating states to launch the Moscow Mechanism towards Belarus². International Observation Mission, established by Committee, has been working in Minsk on a permanent basis since the end of December 2010. The Mission has produced and distributed since then several analytical reports based on the data it has collected on the situation with fundamental rights since 19th December³.

"The launch of the Moscow Mechanism towards Belarus is a very important step in the right direction", says Yuri Dzhibladze, president of Center for Development of Democracy and Human Rights, a Russian NGO actively involved into the work of Committee. "What is needed is an objective assessment by independent authoritative experts of whether Belarus has violated its human rights obligations during the period since the 19th of December, and if yes, which violations have taken place and how exactly this has been manifested. This will allow international organizations and states to develop their positions on relationships with Belarus authorities based on clear international standards and expert evaluation rather than subjective political views. They will be able to make decisions on relationships with the government of Belarus, including on the launch of sanctions or their cancellation in case of positive changes, based on measurable indicators of human rights observation. Such an approach will allow to avoid the priority of "Realpolitik" and economic interests in relationships with Belarus. Protection of human rights must be brought back to the center of international affairs, without double standards and demagogy about "internal affairs".

In case Belarus agrees to cooperate with OSCE and gives the Mission access inside the country, it will have a possibility to select one of the rapporteurs. Unfortunately, recent public statements of Belarus MFA representatives testify to the opposite⁴. In the case of denial of entry of the mission into the country, report of the OSCE representatives on the situation in Belarus will be based on the available data. Secretariat of the Committee of International Control is ready to provide the OSCE rapporteurs with materials collected by the Observation Mission.

For additional information please contact the Secretariat of Committee of International Control over the Human Rights Situation in Belarus at byc@hrgroups.org, +7 (985) 181-18-86

¹ [A letter by 14 OSCE participating states to the Belarus representative to the OSCE, 6 April, 2011.](#)

² Appeal to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Participating States "[On the Need to Take Urgent Measures in Connection with the Crisis with Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the Republic of Belarus](#)"

³ See texts of reports on the Web site of the Committee of International Control: <http://www.hrwatch-by.org/en/iom/analytics>.

⁴ "[Diplomat: There are No Objective Grounds for Launch of the "Moscow Mechanism" towards Belarus](#)" (in Russian)