



Permanent Mission
of the Republic of Poland
to the Organization for Security
and Co-operation in Europe
in Vienna

**Statement delivered by Poland
at the Special Meeting of the Permanent Council on the situation in Belarus
(Vienna, 28 August 2020)**

Thank you for that timely Special Meeting of the Permanent Council and the presence of Prime Minister Edi Rama. We consider it as a sign of real leadership in times of need. Poland fully subscribes to the EU statement. In addition, I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Today, 29 years after adoption of the Belarussian Declaration of Independence, we are witnessing determination of people in Belarus united in a peaceful desire for fair elections, freedom and human rights. Regrettably, peaceful protests have been met with violence. In effect, thousands of activists have become subject to repression, arbitrary detention, ill-treatment or even torture and many of them remain subject to criminal prosecution.

This is unacceptable and contradicts the OSCE commitments and principles. We urge the Belarussian Government to abide by the fundamental human rights and freedoms, to stop political repression and harassment of the opposition, independent media and civil society, as well as ask for an immediate release of political prisoners. We fully support the right of the people of Belarus to free, fair and democratic elections. We call on the authorities of the Republic of Belarus to open the way for the political solution by engaging in a meaningful dialogue. We welcome the establishment of the Coordination Council, which can be a useful platform for preparing the ground for the dialogue with the authorities.

We praise the endurance of the people and civil society in Belarus who are actively engaged in defending democracy and the rule of law. Poland reiterates its strong commitment to strengthening our engagement with Belarussian civil society and to facilitating people-to-people contacts. Against this backdrop, my government has adopted an aid package called "*Solidarity with Belarus*".

For many years Poland has enjoyed good cooperation with Belarus in regard to Confidence- and Security Building Measures. We hope that also in the present situation good record of bilateral contacts will contribute to preserving stability in the region. We appeal to Minsk to

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use all relevant channels to increase transparency of its military actions next to the Polish border. On our side we want to state clearly, that any claims about a NATO buildup on the border with Belarus are baseless.

We fully respect and support the sovereignty, the integrity and the independence of Belarus. Therefore, we call on any foreign actors to refrain from actions that would undermine Belarus' independence and sovereignty. The future of Belarus should lie in the hands of its citizens. The Belarusian nation in its desire for democratic change, demonstrated during the peaceful protests cannot be ignored.

In closing, let me highlight the unique role the OSCE is playing in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. In this regard, thanking the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Prime Minister Edi Rama for his presence, I would like to underline our full support to the CiO initiatives. We trust that the OSCE remains best placed to contribute positively to the process of national reconciliation in Belarus.

Let me add that it is a worrying approach to launch accusations against facilitators or OSCE institutions. One should rather focus on taking advantage of opportunities they are ready to offer. Poland stands by the current and incoming Chairmanship's efforts in this regard.