**Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Belarus**

**2 November 2020**

**Intervention by the delegation of Estonia**

Estonia welcomes the delegation of the Republic of Belarus.

Despite of the fact that Belarus had accepted a number of previous cycle UPR recommendations there has been no real progress. Moreover, the situation has deteriorated. The events of recent months are clear proof of this.

We cannot ignore the overwhelming evidence that the presidential election on 9 August 2020 was fraudulent nor the massive and systematic human rights and fundamental freedoms violations committed by the Belarusian security forces that followed the elections. The causes of the current human rights crisis in Belarus are rooted in systemic violations since two decades.

Estonia is deeply concerned about the situation of fundamental freedoms, inter alia the freedom of expression, including online, and the freedom of assembly in Belarus. Human rights must be protected online just as they are protected off-line. Estonia condemns the ongoing use of partial and complete Internet shutdowns, as well as targeted content blocking, by the authorities of Belarus in the aftermath of the presidential elections. The restrictions on free and pluralistic media, including social media and other digital communication platforms to erode media freedom and civic space are unacceptable.

We urge the Belarusian authorities to respect and fulfil its international human rights obligations, in particular immediately end all forms of torture and inhuman treatment and other severe violations, including sexual violence.

We reiterate the call for Belarus to promptly introduce a moratorium on all executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Estonia recommends the Republic of Belarus to:

* Allow for the conduct of credible, transparent, independent and impartial investigations into all human rights violations and abuses, including in connection to the 2020 presidential election.
* Release immediately and unconditionally all political prisoners and those arbitrarily detained.
* Ensure the safety of all journalists and the freedom of peaceful assembly in line with international standards.
* Refrain from Internet shutdowns and blocking or filtering of services.

We wish the delegation of Belarus a successful review meeting.

Thank you!