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**UPR36 – Belarus**

Statement by Slovakia

2 November 2020

Madam President,

Slovakia welcomes the delegation of Belarus and thanks it for the presentation of its national report.

Reports on human rights in Belarus clearly demonstrate and confirm that the human rights situation in the country not only saw little improvement since the last UPR of Belarus in May 2015 but, to the contrary, it has severely deteriorated after the presidential elections in August last.

Civil society activists, independent media and other human rights defenders face government harassment and pressure. Journalists have been arbitrarily prosecuted on a variety of grounds and internet freedoms have been further restricted by the Government thus cruelly impeding on freedom of expression.

Authorities continue to crack down on peaceful protests, what after the presidential elections on 9 August turned into police violence and brutality. Today, we see evident disrespect for the rule of law, gross disregard of human rights and their massive violations. The reports of torturing and ill-treatment of people in police custody for their participation in peaceful protests are alarming.

Slovakia, therefore, recommends to Belarus the following:

1. Immediately commute all death sentences to terms of imprisonment and establish an official moratorium on executions;
2. Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty;
3. Fully respect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and bring legislation in line with Belarus’s international commitments;
4. Publicly recognize human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, and ensure support for them to carry out their human rights work without harassment and intimidation;
5. Fully investigate all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, including of those detained during the recent post-election protests, and bring all those responsible to justice in a fair trial;
6. Grant unfettered access to international human rights monitors, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus and other special procedures mandate holders, and engage in a full, transparent and constructive cooperation with them.

We wish Belarus a successful implementation of recommendations.

I thank you, Madam President.