



**DELEGATION TO THE EURONEST PA
DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH BELARUS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
- The Chairs -**

JOINT STATEMENT

**“Belarus presidential elections: we criticise the context and attacks by police,
which are not conducive to a constructive dialogue and democratisation”**

Brussels, 20 December 2010. Mr Kristian VIGENIN (S&D, Bulgaria), Chairman of the Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, Mr Jacek PROTASIEWICZ (EPP, Poland), Chairman of the Delegation for relations with Belarus, and Ms Heidi HAUTALA (Verts/ALE, Finland), Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, made the following statement on Belarus presidential elections of 19 December 2010:

"We, as well as several other MEPs representing various political groups, regret that the European Parliament was not invited to observe the elections.

Our aim has been to maintain the political dialogue alive and to work, as far as this is possible, to help Belarus take its rightful place in the European family, if this will be people's wish and when this will be possible, starting from participation in the activities of the political bodies, which we want to install together in the European Parliament.

We are not technical observers, but political partners. However, we should point, together with the OSCE/ODIHR, to the irregularities reported. The Preliminary Statement by the OSCE/ODIHR notes that: "the (election) process deteriorated significantly during the vote count, with observers assessing almost half of the vote counts monitored as bad or very bad. This has undermined the steps that had been taken to improve the election". Tony Loyd, Head of the OSCE short-term Election Observation Mission, announced today that "the counting process lacked transparency". According to the OSCE experts, the election campaign lacked "media diversity and reduced the possibility for voters to make an informed choice". Moreover, "the Central Election Commission [...] lacked impartiality", as "less than 1 per cent of commission members represented the opposition". We regret that "the legal framework does not yet adequately guarantee the conduct of elections in line with OSCE commitments". We agree with Mr. Loyd that "this election has failed to give Belarus the new start it needed".

Moreover we must strongly condemn the beating and arrests by the police of some opposition leaders and candidates, journalists, human rights defenders, as well as crack-down on peaceful demonstrators in the evening of the Election Day in Minsk: these facts go in the opposite direction of what would be desirable.

We call on the Belarusian authorities to immediately release all those detained, to investigate the circumstances of the excessive use of force on 19th December 2010 by the police and the special forces, and to take appropriate measures towards those responsible for afore mentioned violations of the human rights and basic freedoms.

It is now urgent that the Belarusian authorities listen to the demands of Belarusian society, and also to the ideas of the opposition, to resume a national public debate on the future of the country and a consistent agenda for reform. The EU Institutions have already shown their readiness to assist Belarus, provided it will embark on a genuine political democratisation.

We look forward to the outcome of such domestic political dialogue, which could result in welcoming our partners from Belarus in Euronest and in launching proper bilateral parliamentary dialogue”.

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