



General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 June 2010

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Fifteenth session
Agenda item 6
Universal Periodic Review

Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review*

Belarus

* Previously issued under document symbol A/HRC/WG.6/8/L.15. The annex to the present report is circulated as received.

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Introduction

1. The Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, established in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, held its eighth session from 3 to 14 May 2010. The review of Belarus was held at the 16th meeting, on 12 May 2010. The delegation of Belarus was headed by the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva, Mikhail Khvostov. At its 17th meeting, held on 14 May 2010, the Working Group adopted the report on Belarus.
2. On 7 September 2009, the Human Rights Council selected the following group of rapporteurs (troika) to facilitate the review of Belarus: Norway, the Philippines and Senegal.
3. In accordance with paragraph 15 of the annex to resolution 5/1, the following documents were issued for the review of Belarus:
 - (a) A national report submitted/written presentation made in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) (A/HRC/WG.6/8/BLR/1);
 - (b) A compilation prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in accordance with paragraph 15 (b) (A/HRC/WG.6/8/BLR/2);
 - (c) A summary prepared by OHCHR in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) (A/HRC/WG.6/8/BLR/3).
4. A list of questions prepared in advance by Argentina, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was transmitted to Belarus through the troika. Those questions are available on the extranet of the universal periodic review.

I. Summary of the proceedings of the review process

A. Presentation by the State under review

5. At the 16th meeting, the delegation of Belarus, headed by the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva, Mikhail Khvostov, began its presentation of the national report. It expressed its view that the universal periodic review process had successfully fulfilled its purpose of ensuring the objective review of the human rights situation in all countries. According to the delegation, consultations had been held with a maximum number of interested actors, including civil society, during the preparation of the national report. The delegation stressed that it had no intention of ignoring the challenges and shortcomings in the protection and promotion of human rights, while noting that the pace and conditions of the development and capabilities of Governments differed.
6. The delegation noted that Belarus had managed to accomplish a series of achievements under difficult conditions, including, inter alia, the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in 1986, and that those achievements were a basis for confidence that human rights in Belarus were in the process of sustainable development.
7. The delegation referred to the United Nations Human Development Report 2009, according to which Belarus ranked 68th in the human development index and was included

in the group of countries with high human development. As noted by the delegation, Belarus had implemented the Millennium Development Goals related to poverty eradication, equality between men and women, and access to primary education prior to the deadline.

8. According to the delegation, the literacy rate of the Belarusian population was among the highest in the world, standing at 99.7 per cent for adults and 99.8 per cent for minors.

9. The delegation stated that the country's unemployment rate was the lowest in Eastern Europe. Belarus had the second highest gross domestic product per capita in the Commonwealth of Independent States and one of the lowest poverty rates in the world. Approximately 85.4 per cent of State support was allocated to the needs of the social sector, which was the highest level in the region. The delegation referred to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which ranked Belarus 44th in terms of expenditure on health and education, quality of education and adult literacy, life expectancy, good governance, level of corruption, sanitation and clean water supply. It noted that Belarus was among the world leaders in overcoming economic inequalities.

10. The delegation highlighted the fact that Belarus was party to nearly all core human rights instruments of the United Nations. The Constitution recognized the universally recognized principles of international law and ensured that the country's legislation was consistent with them. According to the delegation, universally recognized human rights standards were reflected in the relevant national legislation, including, inter alia, laws on political parties, voluntary organizations and trade unions, national minorities, and religious organizations.

11. As noted by the delegation, the President, as the guarantor of the Constitution and of human rights and freedoms, adopted measures to defend and implement citizens' rights by issuing laws and deciding on specific issues, coordinating action on human rights with the three branches of Government. It also noted that the National Assembly (Parliament) adopted laws, established legal mechanisms, ensured the observance and protection of citizens' rights and freedoms, and had a Standing Commission for Human Rights.

12. The delegation stated that a network of specialized State-public institutions, including, inter alia, the National Commission on the Rights of the Child, the National Council on Gender Policy and the Inter-Ethnic Advisory Council, operated in the country to promote and protect various categories of human rights.

13. The delegation noted that the Act on Citizens' Appeals obliged Government bodies and officials to adopt the measures necessary to restore citizens' rights that had been violated and to oversee their implementation. In 2009, a total of 40,000 appeals had been submitted by citizens on issues involving human rights and policies.

14. According to the delegation, there were currently 2,200 non-governmental organizations and 15 political parties. Belarus had an effective and independent judiciary; it noted that this was an important factor for human rights protection.

15. The delegation referred to the data of both the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, according to which Belarusian women enjoyed a high level of civil liberties, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, according to which Belarus ranked 19th in the world in terms of the level of representation of women in Parliament. It stated that 36 women's organizations operated in the country. According to the delegation, women held 19.3 per cent of senior positions in State bodies and 46.4 per cent of judgeships.

16. As noted by the delegation, Belarus devoted special attention to ensuring opportunities for children's self-expression, and there were 23 children's organizations and 141 youth associations receiving financial support from the State. The number of adoptions

by foreigners had decreased, and 72.7 per cent of orphans were under alternative forms of guardianship.

17. At the United Nations, the President had launched the initiative to intensify international efforts to combat human trafficking, as a result of which a global plan of action was expected to be adopted at the United Nations. Owing to effective measures, the number of crimes involving human trafficking had decreased. Belarus had established an International Training Centre on Migration and Combating Human Trafficking.

18. According to the delegation, people from more than 130 ethnic groups lived in Belarus, and conflicts on ethnic, racial, cultural, linguistic or religious grounds had traditionally been non-existent. There were 123 voluntary organizations representing ethnic and cultural communities that received financial support from the Government. Persons belonging to a number of ethnic groups studied their mother tongue in educational institutions. Newspapers were published, and radio and television programmes were broadcast, in Polish, Ukrainian and Lithuanian.

19. The delegation mentioned the increase in the number of religious communities from 765 to 3,262 and the increase in the number of religious denominations from 8 to 25. Registered religious organizations were exempt from taxes and received State assistance for the restoration of religious buildings.

20. The delegation highlighted the active cooperation of Belarus with international organizations. Belarus had taken measures for the implementation of recommendations made by the special procedures mandate holders on freedom of expression and opinion; an independent judiciary and lawyers; the trafficking in persons, especially women and children; and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which had visited Belarus. Furthermore, Belarus had sent invitations to eight special procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council to visit the country. Belarus had also actively cooperated with treaty-based bodies and had submitted its periodic reports to five of those bodies in 2009. At the initiative of Belarus, representatives of OHCHR had visited the country in 2009 to discuss possible assistance or support for Belarus in protecting and promoting human rights. The delegation noted that the implementation of a joint project to strengthen human rights capacities had been planned.

B. Interactive dialogue and responses by the State under review

21. During the interactive dialogue, 53 delegations made statements. An additional 31 statements, which could not be delivered during the interactive dialogue owing to time constraints, will be posted on the extranet of the universal periodic review when available.¹ Recommendations made during the dialogue are found in section II of the present report.

22. A number of delegations thanked Belarus for its cooperation with the universal periodic review mechanism and commended the delegation for the comprehensive presentation of the national report. A number of delegations noted with appreciation that Belarus was party to most core human rights treaties of the United Nations.

23. The Russian Federation commended Belarus for achieving political stability and a high level of economic development. It noted impressive results in the area of basic

¹ Viet Nam, Slovenia, Mexico, Pakistan, Kuwait, Chile, the United States of America, Germany, Angola, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Lebanon, the Holy See, Zimbabwe, Argentina, Jordan, Denmark, Slovakia, Cambodia, Australia, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Latvia, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Japan, Myanmar, Yemen, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia and South Africa.

economic and social rights, including the right to work, health and education. It also noted positive momentum in the protection of civil and political rights. The Russian Federation made recommendations.

24. Bhutan noted the efforts of Belarus to educate the general population about human rights. It welcomed the methods and strategies employed in promoting the rights of the child and noted steps taken to achieve gender equality. It made recommendations.

25. The United Arab Emirates noted that, despite many challenges, Belarus had worked to improve the human rights system, especially regarding the right to health and education. It also expressed satisfaction at its cooperation with Belarus in the human rights field, in particular concerning the trafficking in persons. The United Arab Emirates also appreciated the efforts of Belarus regarding care for children and asked what further measures had been taken to protect their rights.

26. Brazil highlighted the positive developments concerning women's rights, but noted that the legislation lacked provisions on gender equality and violence against women. It mentioned the importance of creating a juvenile justice system and of prohibiting corporal punishment. It encouraged Belarus to pay due attention to racist and xenophobic incidents. It made recommendations.

27. Tunisia noted the recent establishment of the Advisory Council, an independent institution playing a positive role in formulating proposals aimed at contributing to the country's socio-economic and political well-being. It welcomed the adoption of the national plan for gender equality 2008-2010 and the fact that the relevant development goal set out in the Millennium Declaration had been achieved. Tunisia made a recommendation.

28. Algeria congratulated Belarus on the progress made in the area of economic, social and cultural rights despite the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986, which had placed it among the first in its region and beyond in terms of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Algeria made recommendations.

29. Bahrain noted policies and initiatives to protect human rights, such as the right to health, and efforts to combat the trafficking in persons. It valued the efforts to provide medical care free of charge and to reduce the mortality and morbidity rates. Bahrain acknowledged the country's efforts to harmonize its legislation with international standards in order to rehabilitate trafficking victims.

30. Azerbaijan referred to the positive policy of Belarus to ensure dignified living standards for its population despite difficulties, noting the reductions in maternal and infant mortality. It congratulated Belarus on its policy related to the Millennium Development Goals and praised its national and international efforts in combating trafficking. Azerbaijan made recommendations.

31. Lithuania noted the attention devoted to ensuring social and economic rights and recognized both its national and its international efforts in combating human trafficking. Lithuania made recommendations.

32. Egypt welcomed the dissemination of human rights education and the establishment of a national action plan. It lauded the efforts of Belarus to ensure the right to work and its ability to achieve a number of development goals set out in the Millennium Declaration. It requested elaboration on the country's efforts, achievements and challenges in combating human trafficking. It made recommendations.

33. Singapore commended Belarus for steps taken to further advance women's and children's rights through respective plans of action. It congratulated Belarus on its low unemployment rate and stated that the country had done well in the areas of housing, health and education. Singapore made a recommendation.

34. Malaysia was encouraged to note the ongoing engagement with the international human rights system in terms of capacity-building and technical assistance, as well as the partnership between the Government and civil society in establishing a specialized network of public institutions. It made recommendations.

35. Italy acknowledged that, while freedom of religion and worship was constitutionally guaranteed, religious minorities were subject to different treatment by the Orthodox Church, and asked what measures were intended to be taken to guarantee full respect for freedom of religion. Italy made recommendations.

36. India referred to the fact that Belarus had achieved its goal of eradicating poverty and was on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of reducing child mortality, protecting maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and attaining sustainable development. It referred to the country's adoption of a number of legal instruments for the protection of children, the establishment of a Council on Gender Policy and measures taken to combat trafficking.

37. Switzerland asked for confirmation that two individuals had been executed last March despite the delay requested by the Human Rights Committee. It also stated that obstacles to freedom of expression and assembly remained important, in particular the registration procedure for human rights defenders, independent media and political parties. Switzerland made recommendations.

38. Cuba noted the political commitment of Belarus to human rights. It emphasized the provision of free education and health care, the eradication of illiteracy, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal on primary education, the low level of maternal and child mortality, and the drastic reduction in HIV/AIDS among young people. It inquired about the work of the International Teaching Centre on migration and the fight against trafficking. Cuba made recommendations.

39. The Lao People's Democratic Republic noted the progress made by Belarus as a democratic State based on the rule of law and social justice since its independence. It referred to the effects of the Second World War and the Chernobyl accident on the country's economy and the population's health. It made a recommendation.

40. Austria welcomed measures taken to improve prison conditions for detainees, but noted persisting harsh conditions in detention centres and expressed concern about the use of torture, judicial procedures falling short of fair trial, and cases of unlawful detention. It stated that Belarus continued to carry out executions and that the rights of minorities were still not respected. Austria made recommendations.

41. Palestine noted the integration of human rights into the Constitution. It welcomed efforts to ensure respect for freedom of opinion and religion, to provide necessary services to refugees, to raise the status of women and to combat discrimination and intolerance. Palestine made recommendations.

42. Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) highlighted the rapid progress made in the living standards of the people of Belarus owing to the allocation of 85 per cent of public investment to social assistance. It noted that social rights were guaranteed in conditions of equality and inclusiveness and without discrimination. Venezuela made a recommendation.

43. Morocco congratulated Belarus on its institutional human rights framework, especially to protect the rights of women, children, the elderly and the disabled. It asked whether Belarus would ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It acknowledged the country's efforts in the area of human and social development. Morocco made recommendations.

44. Bolivia (Plurinational State of) valued the importance attached to the right to work in the Constitution and the national policies of Belarus. It also noted the work of the National Council for Labour and Social Affairs, with tripartite representation, and requested Belarus to share its good practices in achieving low unemployment rates. It inquired about good practices in education and health. Bolivia made recommendations.

45. Hungary noted with concern anomalies in the fields of torture, ill treatment and prison conditions; the right to freedom of assembly, expression, association and religion; political participation and the electoral process; human rights defenders; and the independence of judges. It welcomed the recommendation of the Constitutional Court that the death penalty be abolished, as well as its comprehensive measures to, inter alia, improve the situation of children. It made recommendations.

46. China appreciated the practical measures taken to implement all Millennium Development Goals. It stated that Belarus had increased its investment in medical care and social welfare and had achieved remarkable progress in protecting the right to health and education. It also stated that Belarus had adopted a national plan for 2008-2010 to secure gender equality and the implementation of the rights of women. China made recommendations.

47. Qatar welcomed efforts made to guarantee the right to work and noted the increased employment of persons with disabilities. Qatar noted efforts to improve social policies, including in terms of health and housing. It appreciated efforts to face environmental challenges and rehabilitate the area affected by the 1986 Chernobyl accident.

48. Kazakhstan stressed that the involvement of Belarus in the universal periodic review process and its invitations to several special procedure mandate holders displayed the country's commitment regarding its international obligations. It commended Belarus for the highest literacy rate in the world and a non-discrimination policy, and for improving gender equality and human development and combating human trafficking. Kazakhstan made recommendations.

49. The Sudan noted high human development indicators in Belarus. With regard to the health impacts and environmental damage caused by the Chernobyl accident, it inquired about measures taken to address remaining problems. The Sudan made recommendations.

50. Norway referred to the active participation of civil society as essential to a meaningful universal periodic review process and effective cooperation with the United Nations human rights system as a key objective. It noted that the distribution of independent publications was still legally prohibited and expressed concern about the vulnerable situation of human rights defenders, journalists and lawyers. It reaffirmed its opposition to the death penalty and deplored recent executions. It made recommendations.

51. Armenia commented about the process of establishing a juvenile justice system and praised Belarus for having initiated the process of formulating a global plan of action against human trafficking. It acknowledged the decision of Belarus to include human rights education in school curriculums and encouraged the country to expand it beyond the school system. Armenia made recommendations.

52. Israel noted the efforts of Belarus regarding anti-trafficking legislation and its campaign against criminal organizations involved in human trafficking and sexual exploitation. It remained concerned about capital punishment sentencing in the absence of a fair trial, the culture of impunity, and summary execution and torture, as well as about freedom of expression, opinion, assembly and association. It made recommendations.

53. With regard to the death penalty, the delegation explained that the issue of its abolition was very sensitive. When a universal referendum had been held on the issue in 1996, more than 80 per cent of the population had voted in favour of retaining this form of

punishment. The Constitution and the Penal Code set out the temporary and exclusive nature of the application of the death penalty, as provided for in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The delegation noted that the death penalty was applied extremely rarely and that the law regulated the procedure for amnesty for those sentenced to death.

54. The delegation noted that Belarus understood and respected the position of countries asking for the abolition of the death sentence, and that it was indeed considering ways and means to achieve its abolition. A parliamentary working group had been established for that purpose. Efforts had also been made to influence public opinion through the mass media and awareness-raising campaigns. However, a decision to abolish the death penalty or adopt a moratorium could not be taken without bearing in mind the outcome of the referendum. A decision should be made in full awareness and should be irrevocable. Belarus would continue its cooperation with the international community on this matter. In that regard, Belarus recalled that it had not voted against the General Assembly resolutions promoting a moratorium.

55. With regard to the right to engage in peaceful demonstration, Belarus provided the assurance that it was guaranteed by law as long as demonstrations did not violate public order or the rights of other citizens. Public security and order had to be maintained in the conduct of demonstrations. The procedures established by law were designed to ensure the realization of the freedoms of citizens as well as public security. The delegation noted that this was entirely consistent with its international obligations, including those under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

56. Concerning the question of torture, Belarus noted that it was party to the Convention against Torture. In order to ensure criminal responsibility for acts of torture, the definition set out in article 1 of the Convention was fully applied. The Penal Code described all such acts as serious crimes punishable by 3 to 10 years of imprisonment, in addition to a provision prohibiting perpetrators from holding public posts. Persons subjected to torture could submit complaints to the prosecutor's office or the judiciary, which had to respond to such complaints without delay, and the law also provided for means of public oversight.

57. According to the delegation, Belarus also devoted special attention to the issue of human detention conditions. No person could be detained other than on the basis of law, all detentions had to respect human dignity, and all cruel or degrading treatment was prohibited. The Government had allocated considerable resources to the improvement of correctional institutions.

58. The delegation noted that its legislation on freedom of association was based on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Political parties and public organizations could freely pursue their activities in accordance with their statutes and programmes. The elimination of political parties or public organizations for political reasons was prohibited by law. The laws on political parties and on public organizations set out the requirements and procedures for their establishment, and the requirements were of a uniform nature and did not depend on the nature of the activities pursued by the organization concerned. There was also an easily accessible appeals mechanism.

59. The delegation stated that, while some of the requirements for the establishment of associations might appear rigid, they were justified in practice. Belarus was one of the few countries in which the activities of non-governmental organizations did not include extremism, xenophobia or religious or racial hatred. The delegation noted that there was a favourable environment for the activities of such organizations. More than 2,200 public associations and 15 political parties were registered. According to the delegation, the number of associations was constantly rising.

60. The delegation noted that a similar situation prevailed with regard to trade union activity. Belarus had been a member of the International Labour Organization since 1954 and had ratified 49 of its conventions.

61. Belarus stated that the monopolization of the media by the State or by private individuals or entities was prohibited. According to the delegation, the State did not regulate Internet media. Equal economic conditions existed for the development of all media, irrespective of their ownership. The 2009 Law on Mass Media had established the legal mechanisms for independent professional media activity and simplified the procedure for establishing media.

62. The delegation noted that its legislation enshrined and ensured the conduct of elections in accordance with the international treaties to which it was a party. Thus, Belarus followed the generally recognized standards for the preparation and conduct of elections, although there were, unfortunately, no universal criteria by which to evaluate the democratic nature of elections. According to the delegation, the law on elections was being constantly improved, and the Electoral Code had recently been amended to extend the rights of participants in election campaigns as well as those of observers. Belarus followed the principle that elections should be observed, and elections in Belarus were monitored not only by a large number of national observers, but also by foreign observers, including representatives of international organizations.

63. Nicaragua emphasized that Belarus had developed a democratic State and had attained the poverty eradication objective set out in the Millennium Declaration. Nicaragua made recommendations.

64. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya noted that Belarus had brought its national legislation into line with human rights instruments. Libya praised the introduction of human rights education in primary schools and similar awareness-raising measures. Libya made recommendations.

65. Oman noted the commitment of Belarus to human rights protection, as demonstrated by its achievements in eradicating poverty and reducing unemployment rates and maternal and child mortality rates, as well as achievements in education and other areas. Oman made recommendations.

66. Bangladesh noted that the economic success of Belarus had led to a steady reduction in poverty, helped to foster the enjoyment of human rights and made progress in the health sector. It noted the significant efforts made in combating human trafficking, and its commitment to engage constructively with the United Nations human rights mechanisms. Bangladesh made recommendations.

67. Spain thanked Belarus for the presentation of its national report and made recommendations.

68. Uzbekistan noted that Belarus was implementing measures to protect human rights. It observed that Belarus had transposed their provision in its national legislation. Uzbekistan commended efforts in the areas of health and education and in combating human trafficking. Uzbekistan made recommendations.

69. The Islamic Republic of Iran noted that Belarus had extended constructive cooperation to the international human rights machinery. It highlighted achievements regarding most of the Millennium Development Goals, including those related to poverty eradication, illiteracy and infant and maternal mortality. Iran made recommendations.

70. Indonesia commended Belarus for its measures to ensure the right to education and achieve a high literacy rate. It referred to the country's attention to the educational needs of

disabled children and of non-Belarus nationals, and noted the increasing acknowledgement of the role of civil society. It made a recommendation.

71. Iraq sought clarification regarding the programme on human trafficking and illegal migration for the period 2008-2010, inquiring whether the Government intended to extend it. Iraq urged Belarus to cooperate with the Human Rights Council with regard to the special procedures. Iraq made a recommendation.

72. Tajikistan stated that Belarus had worked consistently to extend mechanisms for safeguarding, in particular, the right of citizens to work and the right to social security, together with the rights of children and women and the right to education, including human rights education. It asked about the country's efforts to combat human trafficking. Tajikistan made recommendations.

73. Ireland welcomed the establishment of the European Union-Belarus Human Rights Dialogue and the introduction of a plan for gender equality. It asked questions about human rights defenders and the law on mass events. It expressed concern about reports concerning the arbitrary application of registration standards, the harassment and closure of non-governmental organizations, the right to freedom of association, and the continuing difficulties faced by independent newspapers in being registered. It made recommendations.

74. The Syrian Arab Republic referred to the efforts of Belarus to find a compromise among realizing individual rights, heeding the interests of society and maintaining a balance in protecting human rights. It noted the country's democratic progress. It made recommendations.

75. Canada expressed concern about the deteriorating human rights situation, in particular the lack of free and fair elections, the curtailment of political freedoms, the intimidation of political opponents, State control over media and restrictions on independent media, and restrictions on freedom of association and assembly. Canada made recommendations.

76. Netherlands commended Belarus for its efforts to combat the trafficking in persons. It referred to the country's application of the death penalty and expressed concern about its procedures for appeals in such cases and about reports of the continued harassment, intimidation and arbitrary arrest of human rights defenders, politically active individuals and journalists. It made recommendations.

77. The Czech Republic referred to the issue of the death penalty. It raised the issues of protection against torture and the protection of human rights defenders. It requested Belarus to elaborate on its measures to strengthen the independence of the judiciary. It made recommendations.

78. Belgium remained concerned about the situation of human rights, despite a number of positive developments since 2008. It regretted the fact that Belarus was the only European State to apply the death penalty, and that the 2009 Act on the mass media unduly restricted freedom of the media. It also stated that civil society faced a series of unjustified obstacles compromising freedom of association. Belgium made recommendations.

79. Nepal referred to the efforts of Belarus in socio-economic and political development and in ensuring the rule of law and social justice. It highlighted the Act on Citizen Appeals as innovative and commended the country's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating poverty and its constructive cooperation with the international human rights mechanisms.

80. Djibouti noted the openness of Belarus with certain mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, which attested to its commitment to build a society based on social justice

and respectful of democracy. It stated that the building of a democratic State respectful of rights was a dynamic and gradual process involving the implementation of all human rights. Djibouti made recommendations.

81. Poland expressed concern at the complicated procedure for registering civic organizations, political parties and unions and that the law allowed for the possibility of arbitrary rejection. It referred to the Criminal Code, which provided for deprivation of freedom for up to two years for participating in the activities of an unregistered civic or religious association or party. It made recommendations.

82. Finland expressed concern about the issues of capital punishment and the situation of the Roma community. It asked questions about those issues and made recommendations.

83. Turkey stated that it was pleased by the good record of Belarus in terms of access to health and the right to education. It supported efforts to combat human trafficking and welcomed the modernization of the penal corrections system. It also encouraged the authorities to continue efforts to implement the revised electoral system in order to address shortcomings.

84. France asked whether Belarus would abolish the death penalty. It asked about measures taken to continue investigating allegations of enforced disappearance, as planned in 2009, pursuant to the recommendations of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. France made recommendations.

85. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea noted the efforts of Belarus to strengthen its constitutional, legal, political and economic guarantees. It commended the country's efforts in the area of economic, social and cultural rights, including the increased expenditure for education, which had led to the high literacy rate; the advanced health-care system; and growth in per capita income. It made recommendations.

86. With respect to the issue of human trafficking, the delegation noted that Belarus, as a party to all international instruments aimed at combating modern forms of slavery, had made the consideration of measures against the trafficking in human beings a priority of Government policy.

87. The delegation stated that, since 2002, Belarus had been implementing a comprehensive Government programme to combat the trafficking in persons. Eighteen criminal organizations, including 15 international ones, and 64 criminal gangs had been eliminated. The Government, together with international organizations and national public associations, had put in place a scheme for the rehabilitation and social reintegration of trafficking victims.

88. As noted by the delegation, in 2009, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children, had visited Belarus and commended its efforts to combat the trafficking in human beings at the national and international levels. The Government continued to devote attention to the further improvement of legislation and new laws, including the Law on Combating Trafficking, which was slated for adoption in 2010.

89. Regarding the protection of persons with disabilities, the delegation mentioned the Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities and the implementation of State programmes on the environment without limitations for persons with disabilities. Owing to measures carried out by the Government, the employment rate for persons with disabilities had risen from 25 per cent in 1995 to 45 per cent in 2008.

90. Concerning the protection of children's rights, the delegation noted that Belarus had developed a system for providing material support to families and children, and that the

budget financed 40 per cent of the costs of children's meals in nursery schools and of care, medical and psychological monitoring services.

91. As noted by the Government, equal access to education for every child, regardless of his or her health condition and learning capability, was a priority for the Government. Belarus devoted special attention to orphans and children without parental care, thus providing additional social guarantees for them. Special attention was devoted to combating violence against children in unfavourable family conditions, and a mechanism had been put in place for the timely provision of assistance to children in socially vulnerable situations and in need.

92. According to the delegation, Belarus had developed a concept on juvenile justice that envisaged the establishment of special courts to hear administrative, criminal and civil cases involving children.

93. The delegation noted that the Government made systematic efforts to ensure that Roma citizens had access to social and medical services, employment and education, that their children attended school and that they were issued with passports and participated in the country's social and cultural life.

94. Concerning the implementation of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the delegation explained that Belarus was not a member of the Council. However, it would pay due consideration to the recommendations.

95. Regarding the improvement of electoral legislation, the delegation stated that Belarus had called on international and regional organizations to draft unified and universally accepted standards for elections. Belarus expressed its support for the conduct of a comparative analysis of the electoral systems in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States that would highlight shortcomings in national legislation. The delegation expressed the readiness of Belarus to work together with Canada, within both the United Nations and OSCE, to draft universally recognized standards on the conduct of elections.

96. In conclusion, the delegation stated that Belarus considered its participation in the universal periodic review as a unique opportunity to present to States Members of the United Nations comprehensive information about measures it had taken to improve the human rights situation. The delegation reaffirmed the commitment of Belarus to its international human rights obligations. It expressed its view that the results of the interactive dialogue and recommendations would contribute to the efforts of Belarus in the protection and promotion of human rights.

II. Conclusions and/or recommendations

97. **The recommendations formulated during the interactive dialogue and listed below have been examined by Belarus and enjoy its support:**

97.1. **Examine, in the spirit of its engagement in favour of human rights, the possibility of adhering to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Algeria); consider signing and ratifying the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Egypt);**

97.2. **Examine, in the spirit of its engagement in favour of human rights, the possibility of adhering to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Algeria);**

- 97.3. Harmonise national legislation with international human rights norms (Djibouti); continue its efforts to harmonize its national legislation with international standards (Sudan);
- 97.4. Examine the possibility of putting in place a national institution for the defence of human rights accredited by the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (Algeria); consider the establishment of a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles (Egypt); explore the possibility of establishing a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles (Malaysia);
- 97.5. Create a favourable institutional framework to improve the condition of women by integrating them into social, economic and political life (Djibouti);
- 97.6. Continue strengthening cooperation between the Government and civil society organizations in promoting and protecting human rights in areas such as education, public health and gender equality, among others (Malaysia); promote cooperation between the Government and civil society in the area of human rights protection and promotion (Oman);
- 97.7. Continue the elaboration and implementation of national action plans in order to improve the situation of children and the protection of their rights (Oman);
- 97.8. Continue its action-oriented policy on the reduction of infant mortality, maternal care, combating HIV/AIDS and environmental protection (Azerbaijan);
- 97.9. Continue cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations to promote human rights in Belarus (Palestine);
- 97.10. Continue to promote international cooperation in the field of human rights in accordance with its national situation (China); continue its existing collaboration with international institutions in the sphere of human rights (Armenia); continue the constructive cooperation with all human rights mechanisms in order to promote human rights in the country (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya);
- 97.11. Maintain its cooperation with the various international mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights, including this Council and the oversight bodies for those treaties to which Belarus is a party, as well as periodically comply with the submission of its reports to those bodies (Nicaragua);
- 97.12. Strengthen its cooperation with the international human rights system, through the timely submission of periodic reports to the relevant treaty bodies (Egypt); present the remaining reports to treaty bodies without delay, and make every effort to avoid such delays in the future (Hungary); intensify its efforts with a view to submitting delayed reports to treaty bodies (Spain);
- 97.13. Increase cooperation with the United Nations treaty bodies and special procedures, in particular in implementing their recommendations and decisions (Lithuania);
- 97.14. Extend full cooperation to the United Nations special procedures, and ensure that overdue reports to the United Nations treaty bodies are submitted as a matter of priority (Norway);

- 97.15. Respect the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture, and the recommendations of intergovernmental human rights mechanisms, and also cooperate with special procedures (Switzerland);
- 97.16. Agree on the dates for the visit of eight special mandate holders invited by the Government (Hungary);
- 97.17. Engage with other mandate holders, especially with the special rapporteurs on the right to freedom of expression, on human rights defenders and on torture (Hungary);
- 97.18. Respond to the allegation communications of the special procedures (Hungary);
- 97.19. Continue its cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in particular with a view to implementing accepted recommendations made during the universal periodic review (Russian Federation);
- 97.20. Pursue its efforts in the field of promoting the rights of women (Tunisia); continue activities in ensuring women's rights and gender equality (Lithuania); conduct awareness-raising campaigns concerning equality between men and women (Palestine); continue working to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women, especially in the workplace (Bolivia); continue to strengthen the guarantee of women's rights and promote the social status of women, in accordance with the relevant international treaties (China);
- 97.21. Continue the positive work in combating racial discrimination and other forms of intolerance (Palestine); continue its efforts to combat racial discrimination and related intolerance (Islamic Republic of Iran); continue its positive work in combating racial discrimination and related intolerance (Uzbekistan);
- 97.22. Continue its efforts to develop inter-ethnic confidence and prevent all forms of racial discrimination (Bolivia);
- 97.23. As long as the death penalty is not abolished and continues to be carried out, respect minimum standards in this regard, and in particular ensure that the death penalty is applied only for the most serious criminal offences (Belgium);
- 97.24. Adopt the measures necessary to stop domestic violence, in particular with regard to the rights of women, and take measures aimed at protecting the victims of domestic violence (Palestine); consider seeking technical assistance to improve its capabilities to combat domestic violence and the abuse of children (Hungary);
- 97.25. Develop and implement, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, a training course on protecting the human rights of victims of human trafficking for representatives of law enforcement bodies, including those studying at the International Training Centre in Minsk (Russian Federation);
- 97.26. Continue its good practices such as compensation for victims of human trafficking and the establishment of institutions such as the international training centre on human trafficking and migration (Bhutan); pursue and intensify its initiatives in the area of fighting against human trafficking, a form of modern slavery (Algeria); continue to implement its comprehensive

programme to combat human trafficking and to encourage all cooperation with the relevant international organizations in this respect (Azerbaijan); follow up on its initiatives in the fight against the trafficking in persons, especially women and children (Egypt); conduct an evaluation on its anti-trafficking programmes to further strengthen them where appropriate and share its lessons learned in this area (Singapore);

97.27. Combine national and international efforts to combat human trafficking (Palestine); continue efforts and share best practices on combating human trafficking both nationally and internationally by closely cooperating with concerned parties (Kazakhstan); continue its policy of combating trafficking in persons, especially women and children, at the national and international levels, and provide assistance to victims of trafficking through shelter assistance, rehabilitation and compensation for the victims (Armenia); share its best practices in the area of combating trafficking in women and children with other countries in contemporary situation (Bangladesh); continue its efforts to combat human trafficking at the national and international levels through, inter alia, coordination and cooperation with interested Governments and international organizations (Islamic Republic of Iran); continue consolidating national and international efforts in order to effectively combat the trafficking in human beings (Tajikistan);

97.28. Ensure fair trials and strictly respect the absolute prohibition of torture, including ensuring that confessions or information obtained as a result of torture and other ill treatment must not be used as evidence (Austria);

97.29. With regard to the pre-trial detention regime, put in place appropriate measures that would allow for separation of detainees on the basis of gender and age (Malaysia);

97.30. Further improve the living conditions in prisons and pre-trial detention centres (Austria); review compliance of conditions in prison and detention facilities, in particular pre-trial detention facilities, with international standards (Czech Republic);

97.31. Ensure that all prisoners or detainees have access to legal counsel and relatives (Austria);

97.32. Consider establishing and improving the juvenile justice system (Kazakhstan);

97.33. Continue its efforts to reduce the number of children without parental care, including by advancing the ongoing initiatives to address this issue (Cuba);

97.34. Strengthen the status of women, protect motherhood and provide support to the family, which is the nucleus of society (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya); continue its positive efforts aimed at raising the status of women in the society, protecting maternity and supporting the family (Democratic People's Republic of Korea);

97.35. Continue to address the needs of children, including providing them with a family environment, and fulfil other rights to the maximum of ability (Bangladesh);

97.36. Continue its efforts to enhance the rights of women and children and the institution of the family within the framework of national policies and strategies (Islamic Republic of Iran);

- 97.37. Continue hosting and sponsoring international conferences to promote a constructive dialogue among the different religions and beliefs (Oman);
- 97.38. Continue to promote dialogue among different religions (Islamic Republic of Iran); continue the efforts to promote interreligious dialogue and share its experience and good practices with other countries (Tajikistan);
- 97.39. Guarantee freedom of association and expression for all citizens, including the press, human rights defenders, political parties, civic organizations and trade unions (Switzerland);
- 97.40. Continue promoting the participation of civil society in public social policies (Bolivia); continue its constructive engagement with civil society to enable tangible results on the ground through their joint undertakings in the promotion and protection of human rights in the country (Indonesia);
- 97.41. Ensure a participatory and inclusive process with civil society, including independent non-governmental organizations, in accordance with the right to freedom of association, in the follow-up of universal periodic review recommendations (Norway);
- 97.42. Continue the current efforts to increase the representation of women in senior positions, including in Parliament and the Government (Tajikistan);
- 97.43. Continue its efforts in providing equal opportunity of work for all, and also consider efforts to support capacity-building programmes for women (Bhutan); improve the situation of women in the labour market (Kazakhstan);
- 97.44. Continue its efforts aimed at the protection of economic, social and cultural rights of the most vulnerable segments of the population (Cuba); step up efforts in ensuring that the development and poverty alleviation programmes fully benefit the vulnerable groups, including minority and indigenous communities and rural women (Malaysia); continue its successful social policy, adopting actions that increase the provision of social services and giving priority to the most disadvantaged (Venezuela);
- 97.45. Continue supporting all programmes aimed at improving the health of its population in order to reduce mortality rates (Sudan);
- 97.46. Continue its efforts to reduce the rates of infant mortality as a component of the right to health (Syrian Arab Republic);
- 97.47. Strive to put into practice the economic rights of individuals and make all possible efforts to overcome the difficulties with which the economy is confronted owing to the global financial crisis (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya); continue its efforts to secure the economic and social rights of the people in spite of the global financial crisis (Democratic People's Republic of Korea);
- 97.48. Continue its efforts for further progressing in promoting economic and social rights of its people (Bangladesh); continue improving the living standards of its people through guarantees of the broader implementation of economic, social and cultural rights (Uzbekistan); continue improving the living standards of its people through guarantees of the broader implementation of economic, social and cultural rights (Tajikistan);
- 97.49. Continue its efforts in providing a decent standard of living for its people, and provide them with enforced social security (Syrian Arab Republic);
- 97.50. Continue to expand and strengthen the existing efforts in human rights education (Bhutan); pursue its efforts in the area of human rights education

and training, and share its experience in this area with other countries (Morocco);

97.51. Continue the coordination among print and audio-visual media to raise awareness and deepen understanding of human rights principles, and protect and promote different cultures, traditions and religions as a principal factor of stable relations among the ethnic groups (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya);

97.52. Promote human rights education for security and police forces (Djibouti);

97.53. Share its experiences in relation to the achievement of the development goals set out in the Millennium Declaration (Egypt); continue its efforts to achieve other Millennium Development Goals, in accordance with the human rights priorities that the State has established in its national policy (Nicaragua);

97.54. Continue to carry out reforms in the country in order to fully ensure the protection of human rights and the rule of law in the country, and continue to exchange best practices on combating human trafficking, advancement of women and protection of the rights of the child and family with all United Nations member countries (Lao People's Democratic Republic);

97.55. Solicit the technical and financial assistance that it believes necessary to accompany it in its projects of human and social development (Morocco).

98. The following recommendations will be examined by Belarus, which will provide responses in due course, but no later than the fifteenth session of the Human Rights Council, in September 2010:

98.1. Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (Brazil) (Italy);

98.2. Ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Brazil);

98.3. Sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (Spain);

98.4. Sign (Iraq)/sign and ratify (Spain)/accede to (Czech Republic)/ratify (Brazil)/ratify and implement (Switzerland) the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

98.5. Sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Spain);

98.6. Sign and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Spain); sign and ratify, within the optimal time frame, the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (France);

98.7. Review the legislative framework to re-assure the full implementation of the freedom of speech (Brazil);

98.8. Ensure that national legislation complies with international fair trial standards and, inter alia, provides for the presumption of innocence, a competent defence for the accused, true rights to appeal, and the ability to seek pardon and commutation of sentence, particularly in capital punishment cases (Israel);

- 98.9. Review its national legislation in order to ensure its compliance with freedom of expression, assembly and association, as guaranteed in articles 19, 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (for example, article 193-1 of the Criminal Code -- acting on behalf of a non-registered organization) (Czech Republic); repeal or amend legislation, such as the Law on Public Events and Criminal Code 193-1, which represses free expression or opinion, assembly and association, in particular that of human rights defenders and other members of civil society (Israel);
- 98.10. That legislation in Belarus regarding the registration of non-governmental organizations be streamlined and made less burdensome (Ireland);
- 98.11. Bring its Law on Mass Events into line with the requirements of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Ireland);
- 98.12. Consider amendments to legislation to facilitate the registration of independent media and to guarantee its freedom (Ireland);
- 98.13. Extend an open and permanent invitation to all special procedures, and respond positively to requests for visits not yet agreed upon (Spain); consider issuing a standing invitation (Brazil);
- 98.14. Take appropriate measures against discrimination against persons belonging to ethnic minorities, in particular measures against harassment by police, and allow equal access to education for all persons belonging to minorities (Austria); strengthen its effort to combat and prevent discrimination faced by the Roma and ensure their full participation in the creation of mechanisms and adoption of measures to this end (Finland);
- 98.15. Adopt measures to guarantee equality before the law for women (Canada); adopt specific legislation to grant gender equality (Brazil);
- 98.16. Declare a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty (Brazil); introduce a moratorium on the execution of the death penalty with a view to completely abolishing capital punishment (Lithuania); adopt a moratorium on the use of the death penalty with a view to its abolition (Italy); extend a moratorium on the death penalty, make public the number of sentences and executions carried out, and consider the ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Spain); put an end to the practice of capital punishment, and declare a moratorium on the death penalty as soon as possible with a view to its abolition (Switzerland);
- 98.17. Consider abolishing the death penalty, and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (Austria); follow the recommendation of the Constitutional Court of Belarus to abolish death penalty and, as a first step, introduce a moratorium on capital punishment without delay (Hungary); consider an immediate moratorium on the use of the death penalty with a view to its permanent abolition (Norway); implement a full moratorium with a view to early and total abolition of the death penalty (Ireland); establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions (Netherlands); introduce a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to the future abolition of capital punishment, and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Czech Republic); abolish the death penalty as soon as possible, and, in the

meantime, establish an immediate moratorium on executions (Belgium); enact an immediate moratorium on executions with a view to ending the use of the death penalty, and accede to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the Sixth and Thirteenth Protocols to the European Convention on Human Rights (Finland); immediately establish a moratorium on executions with a view to the definite abolition of the death penalty, and commute all death sentences to prison sentences (France);

98.18. Release complete information on the execution of Mr. Andrei Zhuk and Mr. Vasily Yuzepchuk in Minsk in March of this year (Norway);

98.19. Suspend the duties of all officers of security forces implicated in cases of enforced disappearance, extrajudicial execution or torture, and ensure that impartial and credible inquiries are carried out so that those responsible for such acts are brought to justice (France); suspend the duties of officials implicated in any cases of enforced disappearance, summary execution and torture, and ensure all necessary measures are taken to investigate fully and impartially such cases and to bring the alleged perpetrators to justice before an independent tribunal, and, if found guilty, to ensure that they are punished in accordance with the international human rights obligations of Belarus, in compliance with General Assembly resolution 62/169 (Israel);

98.20. Implement the recommendations of the report of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on disappeared persons in Belarus, and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Netherlands);

98.21. Introduce the definition of torture reflecting that in article 1 of CAT into its national legislation (Czech Republic);

98.22. Ensure prompt, impartial and comprehensive investigations of all complaints of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of persons subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment (Italy);

98.23. Intensify its efforts to investigate, identify and, if applicable, punish alleged perpetrators of the harassment, arbitrary detention and torture of opponents of the Government, including journalists and human rights defenders (Spain);

98.24. Forbid corporal punishment of children and take order in that matter (Brazil);

98.25. Reinforce the independence of the judiciary (Brazil);

98.26. Ensure that all trials observe international standards for fair trial, and that the Government responds to concerns by defence lawyers and non-governmental organizations regarding trials against human rights defenders (Norway);

98.27. In order to ensure freedom of expression, fully implement provisions of the Constitution of Belarus on freedom of expression, protect all journalists from harassment, and create an enabling environment for the operation of free media through, inter alia, the simplification of registration and accreditation procedures (Lithuania); take concrete steps to meet its obligations on creating an environment that fosters freedom of expression (Norway); eliminate all restrictions on the ability of journalists to report on and criticize Government policy (Canada); develop an action plan to ensure that journalists are able to

conduct their work freely and without fear of retribution (Canada); take the necessary measures, namely in the legislative field, to ensure an independent, free and diversified press (Belgium); bring its laws into line with European and international standards on press freedom, and abolish existing legislation on defamation (Netherlands);

98.28. Take the necessary measures to ensure freedom of expression and association of everyone and, specifically, (i) simplify the registration procedure for public associations, including non-governmental organizations, political parties and trade unions; (ii) remove the prohibition against any activity by non-registered associations; and (iii) abolish article 193-1 of the Constitution, which criminalizes the carrying out of an activity within such a non-registered organization (Belgium);

98.29. Ensure and apply transparent and non-discriminatory decision-making processes with regard to the registration of media outlets and the accreditation of foreign journalists (Canada);

98.30. Ensure that the authorities allow and facilitate the registration of non-governmental organizations and opposition parties (Switzerland); carry out legislative measures that permit the efficient registration, not subject to administrative discretion, of civil organizations, including political parties and unions (Spain); facilitate the registration of non-governmental organizations, and amend the Criminal Code, which criminalizes the activity of non-registered non-governmental organizations (Poland);

98.31. Guarantee that civic organizations, human rights defenders, political parties and unions are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisals, restrictions, judicial harassment and intimidation (Poland); ensure that everyone, including human rights defenders, can peacefully exercise their right to freedom of expression and assembly in conformity with Belarus' obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Poland); ensure that human rights defenders can peacefully exercise their right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, in conformity with the dispositions of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and that it decriminalizes activities of individuals on behalf of non-registered organizations by abolishing article 193-1 of the Criminal Code (Netherlands);

98.32. That violations against human rights defenders, journalists and students are effectively investigated in order to bring those liable to justice (Norway); ensure that these crimes against political activists and journalists are independently and impartially investigated and that their perpetrators are brought to justice (Czech Republic);

98.33. Adopt measures to prevent attacks, harassment, arbitrary detention of political activists and journalists (Czech Republic);

98.34. Simplify the issuance of permissions for holding assemblies (Lithuania);

98.35. Create a positive environment for the activities of human rights organizations and other independent non-governmental organizations, notably by eliminating obstacles to their official registration (Canada); develop a favourable environment for the functioning of all non-governmental organizations and political parties, including simplifying registration procedures (Lithuania);

98.36. Conform to repeated demands of the international community not to detain political prisoners and not to engage in judicial proceedings for political motives, liberalize the media sector, and guarantee freedom of expression and of the media, and reform electoral law so as to guarantee the transparency of vote counting, and, finally, lift all obstacles to the functioning of non-governmental organizations and political parties (France);

98.37. In light of the upcoming elections, implement electoral laws in line with applicable international standards of the OSCE Organization for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights recommendations, and recommendations of the Commonwealth of Independent States Election Observation Mission (Lithuania); fully implement the OSCE recommendations concerning the reform of election regulations, in close cooperation with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (Austria); continue to work with the OSCE Organization for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on electoral reform, with a view to ensuring that the electoral process and legislative framework is fully in line with international standards, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, well in advance of the 2011 presidential election (Ireland); institute reforms guaranteeing free and fair democratic elections that conform to international standards (Canada); commit to inviting independent international observers to monitor future election processes (Canada);

98.38. Make public statements committing to political pluralism and democracy, and, in support of this commitment, adopt and implement policies to ensure that opposition parties are permitted to participate freely in the political process without fear of retribution (Canada).

99. All conclusions and/or recommendations set out in the present report reflect the positions of the submitting State(s) and/or the State under review. They should not be construed as endorsed by the Working Group as a whole.

Annex

Composition of the delegation

The delegation of Belarus was headed by H.E. Mr. Mikhail Khvostov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva, and was composed of the following members:

- H.E. Ms. Natalia Zhylevich, Ambassador, Director of the Department for Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Head of the delegation;
 - Mr. Evgeny Lazarev, Chief of the Human Rights Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
 - Ms. Larisa Belskaya, Advisor of the Human Rights Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
 - Mr. Andrei Taranda, Counsellor, Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva.
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