



Conscience and Peace Tax International

Internacional de Conciencia e Impuestos para la Paz

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN

International non-profit organization (Belgium 15.075/96)

Bruineveld 11 · B-3010 Leuven · Belgium · Ph.: +32.16.254011 ·

Belgian account: 000-1709814-92 · IBAN: BE12 0001 7098 1492 · BIC: BPOTBEB1

www.cpti.ws

e-: cpti@cpti.ws

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ORAL STATEMENT BY CONSCIENCE AND PEACE TAX INTERNATIONAL
Delivered by **Derek Brett**, Thursday 23rd September 2010

ADOPTION OF UPR REPORT ON BELARUS

While welcoming Belarus' announcement that it has invited eight special procedures mandate holders, Conscience and Peace Tax International regrets that the detailed list as revealed in the Addendum to the Report of the Working Group¹ does not include the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief. We urge Belarus to invite this mandate holder, who could investigate persistent reports of the harassment of minority religious denominations and assess progress towards implementation of the right of conscientious objection to military service.

In the latter respect we eagerly await details of the Draft Law on Alternative Service which was to be presented to the Parliament this month. Such legislation is long overdue, having been originally envisaged as part of the implementation package of the 1994 Constitution, and in making arrangements for conscientious objectors Belarus lags behind the other countries of the region.

We encourage a continuation and deepening of the engagement with civil society in preparation for the drafting of the Alternative Service Law, and hope that this has helped to produce a text compatible with established international standards on the implementation of the right of conscientious objection to military service – in particular that there should be no discrimination between objectors on the basis of their denominational adherence, if any, or on the beliefs on which the conscientious objection is grounded, and that the alternative service should not be punitive in nature.

We hope also that pending the early promulgation of legislation a halt will be put to the prosecution and imprisonment of conscientious objectors for their refusal of military service. In this respect, we welcome the fact that at least one of the three conscientious objectors to have been convicted in the last twelve months had his conviction overturned on appeal.

Contact: dubrett@talk21.com

¹ A/HRC/15/16/Add.1, Para 32