



**Statement of the Belarusian National Platform
of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum**

on the EU Council conclusions on Belarus dated 15 February 2016

19 February 2016

We, the participants of the Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, after closely examining the EU Council Decision on Belarus adopted at the meeting of 15 February 2016 in Brussels, state the following:

The cancellation of the European Union's (EU) restrictive measures against Belarusian officials responsible for politically motivated reprisals and the use of violence against citizens who peacefully voiced their political views during the 2010 presidential election campaign sends a contradictory message to Belarusian society as Belarus has seen no real democratic change in the last five years.

- We welcome the efforts of the EU, its member States, international institutions, human rights organizations and other actors who made it possible to remove the issue of political prisoners from the agenda in August 2015 in Belarus. We also appreciate and support the return of the EU and the Republic of Belarus to the Human Rights Dialogue. At the same time, during the last six months we have repeatedly noted human rights violations, and the ignoring of interests, as well as the use of various forms of pressure and repression and a lack of constructive communication by the representatives of the Belarusian authorities in relation to social groups, such as students, journalists, entrepreneurs, cultural activists and others. The presidential election in 2015 was recognized by the OSCE as being inconsistent with international standards. This indicates the unwillingness of the Belarusian authorities to take deliberate, systematic and consistent steps to establish mutually beneficial relations between the EU and Belarus on the basis of internationally accepted values and norms, as well as the absence of any effort to reach an acceptable understanding between the authorities and independent actors in the Belarusian society.

- The lifting of restrictive measures by the EU on a number of officials of the Republic of Belarus could, under certain circumstances, contribute to the creation of conditions for the improvement of relations between Belarus and the EU and the return of Belarusian society to a process of development rather than stagnation and preservation of accumulated diseases and contradictions. However, such a development is only possible in the case of the direct and equal inclusion into the discussion on socio-political issues, challenges and promising solutions of independent actors of the Belarusian society, in particular representatives of professional and business communities, religious faiths, the national cultural elite and, of course, a wide range of independent civil society organizations in Belarus.

- Representatives of civil society organizations, united in the National Platform of EaP CSF are ready to make a constructive contribution to improving EU-Belarus relations and deploy their expertise and play a monitoring role, if the real conditions are created in Belarus for an inclusive and equitable socio-political dialogue, designed to consolidate society and to accelerate development as a part of European civilization.

- Considering the forthcoming election campaigns in 2016 as an opportunity for the Belarusian authorities to demonstrate readiness for positive change and taking into account international opinion and standards, we emphasize the importance and the need to preserve and practice international human rights monitoring mechanisms in Belarus (the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation with human rights in Belarus etc.) and consider them as a necessary element of an independent assessment of the situation.

- We once again draw the attention of the Belarusian authorities, the EU leadership and a broad range of stakeholders within our country and in the international community to the position of the BNP EaP CSF "On the opening of the possibilities of European-Belarusian cooperation" presented by us in November 2015. This assessed the situation of human rights observance in Belarus, as well as the specific mechanisms of cooperation, considered by us to be a priority at this stage of the Belarusian-European relations.

Belarusian civil society organizations – participants of the Belarusian National Platform of the EaP Civil Society Forum:

Ulads Vialichka, Co-chair of EaP CSF, national coordinator on Belarus, Director General of International Consortium "EuroBelarus"

Andrei Yahorau, Centre for European Transformation

Vladimir Dounaev, Public Bologna Committee

Siarhei Mackevich, Assembly of NGOs of Belarus

Tatsiana Zialko, Public Association of Belarusian Pensioners "Our Generation"

Aliaksandr Zialko, IEE "Pension case"

Aliaksandr Karalevich, PA "Education Center "POST"

Leanid Skarabahaty, IPA "Good Will"

Oleg Volchek, Human Rights Centre "Legal assistance to population"

Valadar Tsurpanau, Informal initiative "Mogilev civic space"

Eduard Baravikou, "Mogilev youth center"

Aliaksandr Milinkevich, Human Rights and Enlightenment public association "Movement "For Freedom"

Igor Lednik, Human Rights Movement "Our Belarus"

Dina Shavtsova, Expert rights society "Initiative FORB"

Peter Kouznetsov, Establishment "Centre of regional development GDF"

Elena Tonkacheva, Legal Transformation Centre

Leonid Kalitenya, PA "Centre for Social Innovations"

Yaraslau Bekish, "Green Network"

Natallia Vasilevich, Centre "Ecumena"

Siarhej Drazdouski, Enlightenment Human Rights Establishment "Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities"