



**LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS NUOLATINĖ ATSTOVYBĖ
PRIE TARPTAUTINIŲ ORGANIZACIJŲ VIENOJE**

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA**

OSCE Permanent Council

Statement by Lithuanian Permanent Representative to the International Organizations in Vienna Aurimas Taurantas in response to the presentation of the OSCE Rapporteur's Report under the Moscow Mechanism on Alleged Human Rights Violations in relation with the Presidential Elections of 9 August 2020 in Belarus

Mr. Chairman,

Lithuanian delegation aligns itself with the joint statement delivered on behalf of the participating States which invoked the Moscow Mechanism and the statement delivered on behalf of the EU. I would like to take this opportunity and add some remarks in my national capacity.

Let me join the others in thanking professor Wolfgang Benedek for his dedicated work in preparing the in-depth report, concluded in time-constrained and tense circumstances, under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism. In that respect it is more than surprising to hear from one delegation today about unprofessional nature of the Report. Only those who have not read it may claim that.

Mr. Chairman,

On numerous occasions, we have raised our concerns about serious human rights violations and abuses in our neighbouring Belarus. However, no satisfactory response to the requests on investigation and bringing the responsible to an account was given by the Belarusian delegation.

In such situations, the OSCE has some helpful tools in its toolbox, Moscow Mechanism being one of them. All participating States have recognised it to be an important and useful instrument to provide unbiased and factual basis for further dialogue and action, and as such, in no way constitutes interference into the internal affairs of this country. Therefore, it is regrettable that Belarus refused to cooperate with the rapporteur in the preparation of this important report.

Findings of the report presented today are based on overwhelming volume of evidence and number of testimonials by victims and eyewitnesses, and have confirmed beyond doubt the massive and systematic violations of human rights and abuses committed by the Belarussian authorities against its own citizens before, during and after the Presidential elections. Gravity of the abuses cannot be clearer. Furthermore, the reports of widespread violations of human rights are still ongoing. All this proves that the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism was timely and well justified.

This also confirms the necessity for immediate action. Therefore, we urge those in power in Belarus to reconsider their approach, listen to the wise words of prof. Benedek and implement the

recommendations contained in the Report: first of all, to stop the violence against peaceful protesters; secondly, to release all those unlawfully detained; and thirdly, to ensure full respect for the rights of freedom of peaceful assembly and association and the freedom of expression.

Mr. Chairman, in addition to the mentioned recommendations to the Belarusian authorities, OSCE participating States have called:

- *not to recognize the results of the presidential elections in Belarus on 9 August 2020,*
- *the government of Belarus to implement the [...] recommendations,*
- *to continue the efforts at facilitating dialogue between all actors in Belarus, and*
- *to monitor the establishment of human rights, democracy and the rule of law based on the recommendations made by the rapporteur under the Moscow Mechanism.*

We invite all the participating States to consider with great responsibility these and other recommendations.

We also call the OSCE institutions to follow-up on the implementation of recommendations contained in the Report and the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and the Permanent Council to keep this issue high on the agenda.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman