



Нацыянальная платформа

Форум грамадзянскай супольнасці  
УСХОДНЯГА ПАРТНЁРСТВА

**STATEMENT  
OF THE BELARUSIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM  
OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM**

*March 2, 2012*

*Minsk, Belarus*

*We, the members of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, express our deep concern at the diplomatic conflict between the authorities of Belarus and the European Union.*

The situation that has emerged is only a conflict tip, grounds for which have been created by Belarusian authorities' actions of dispersal of the demonstration on December 19, 2010 and through subsequent repressions against the Belarusian political opposition and civil society. We consider the reaction of the Belarusian authorities to address the decision of the Council of the EU to expand the list of Belarusian officials, to whom the visa restrictions have been applied, as unbalanced and harmful one for Belarusian national interests. This reaction reinforces the atmosphere of mistrust and hostility between Belarus and the European Union, leading to further aggravation of contradictions instead of holding productive dialogue and searching mechanisms of mutually beneficial cooperation and neighborhood.

The European Union has been a constant and reliable partner of the Belarusian civil society on the way of democratization and reforming our country. In particular, responsible structures of the European Union have demonstrated important for us solid principles and coherence in demanding the release of political prisoners and elimination of the consequences of the events of December 19, 2010. A common position of the European Union' diplomatic missions in Belarus, who have taken decision of joint reaction to the diplomatic conflict that has arisen, was a natural response to the political steps of the Belarusian authorities. Herewith we consider dangerous and harmful the further conflict escalation and see unacceptable to transform it into the primary question of the Belarusian-European relations.

Disputes on diplomatic contradictions between the Belarusian authorities and the EU distract attention from the truly important aspects of the Belarusian-European relations. Thus, the conflict increases the gap between Belarus and Europe, and its further development will lead to deeper international isolation of the country, worsen the living conditions and deprive Belarusian citizens of the European prospects. For Belarus to live and to develop as an

independent state, it needs the European perspective, work for approaching norms and standards of the EU and assistance in modernization.

**Taking into consideration all the above mentioned facts and being aware of the Belarusian authorities' responsibility for having created the conflict situation, we urge the leaders of Belarus and the European Union to hold from further conflict escalation and transforming it into an exchange of blows according to the principle "an eye for an eye". We also believe that a simple conflict freezing will not be enough to resolve the whole situation.**

Belarusian authorities must demonstrate aspiration of the Republic of Belarus to fulfill its international obligations in the field of civil and political rights. The actions that would indicate its readiness for constructive negotiation process should be the release of Belarusian political prisoners and holding from further repressions. We urge the Belarusian authorities to abandon the strategy of confrontation and to start the real negotiation process within the country, which would be the best foundation for the normalization of the situation, including the Belarusian-European track.

We also expect the European Union to further implement a coherent and forward-looking policy towards Belarus, not limited to the response to the steps of the Belarusian leadership. The EU should demonstrate its adherence to the principles, not only in the position, but also in action, and to make further steps towards engagement of Belarus as a neighboring country into the European family, even under adverse conditions. The rapid, fundamental and clearly positive step would be in such a situation a total abolition of consular fees for visas for Belarusian citizens to EU countries.

*Representatives of the Belarusian civil society, members of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum are convinced that the solution to the essentially important issues of reforming and modernization of the country and turning it back to the network of the European communities, may lay the basis for negotiations and overcoming the existing conflict between the authorities of Belarus and the European Union.*

Signatures:

*Uladzimir Matskevich*, Chairperson of the Interim Coordination Committee (ICC) of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

*Siarhei Lisichonak*, National coordinator of the EaP Civil Society Forum on Belarus

*Yaraslau Bekish*, member of the ICC of the National EaP CSF Platform, EaP CSF Working Group 3 coordinator

*Uladzislau Vialichka*, member of the ICC of the National EaP CSF Platform, International Consortium "EuroBelarus"

*Andrei Yahorau*, member of the ICC of the National EaP CSF Platform, Center for European Transformation

*Siarhej Drazdouski*, member of the ICC of the National EaP CSF Platform, Enlightenment Human Rights Establishment “Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities”

*Siarhei Mackevich*, member of the ICC of the National EaP CSF Platform, The Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs of Belarus

*Elena Tonkacheva*, Legal Transformation Center

*Olga Smolianko*, Foundation for Legal Technologies Development

*Antonina Yelistratova*, Youth association “Next Stop — New Life”

*Miraslau Kobasa*, Enlightenment Public Association “Leu Sapieha Foundation”

*Leonid Kalitenya*, Public Association “Center for social innovations”

*Dina Shavtsova*, Civil Initiative “For Religious Freedom”

*Aliaksandr Karalevich*, Public Union “Education Center “POST”

*Olga Karatch*, International Centre of Civil Initiatives “Our House”

*Sergei Dezhurko*, Cultural and Enlightenment Public Association “Humanitarian Bridge”

*Natallia Vasilevich*, Centre "Ecumena"

*Tatsiana Zialko*, Initiative group on establishing Public Association of Belarusian Pensioners "Our Generation"

*Iryna Zhykhar*, National Public Association “Belarusian Organization of Working Women”

*Tatsiana Vadalazhskaya*, Humanitarian Technologies Agency

*Tatsiana Raviaka*, Human Right Centre “Viasna”

*Anna Gerasimova*, Belarusian Human Rights House in exile in Vilnius

*Alexander Adamiants*, Center for European Studies

*Olga Stuzhinskaya*, Office for a Democratic Belarus (Brussels)

*Ina Kulei*, Enlightenment Charity Establishment “Committee "Salidarnasc”

*Igor Lednik*, Human Rights Movement "Our Belarus"

*Aleksandr Volchanin*, Public Association “Sojuz Chernobyl - Belarus”

*Irina Sukhy*, Public Association “Ecohome”