

## STATEMENT

*Minsk, 11 November 2010*

On 14 November 2010, there will be the National conference on the results of studies of the Civil Society Index in the Republic of Belarus. The organizer of the studies from the Belarusian side is the head of the board of the public organization "SCAF", a member of the Public Consultation Council at the Administration of the President, Yury Zagoumenov. Simultaneously, the organizer of this conference was allotted a task to create a National platform of civil society, as well as a human rights platform.

Regardless of the fact that representatives of human rights organizations have repeatedly expressed their concerns that:

- the creation of the human rights platform has an unjustified speed and is hasty;
- the state, within the scope of Yury Zagoumenov's project, has expressed no signals of its consent to constructively cooperate and to have a dialogue with human rights defenders;
- a considerable part of human rights organizations in the country were deprived of and still have no official registration;
- until now the Criminal Code of Belarus has Article 193.1. which provides criminal responsibility for activity of non-registered organizations;
- some human rights organizations are actively engaged in monitoring of the election right now and their participation in the creation of the platform to improve relations between human rights organizations and the authorities can be regarded as a factor which will affect independence and neutrality of the implementation of monitoring of the election;
- the National platform of civil society to develop a mechanism of its interaction with state-run organizations and international partners is being created too fast, without taking into account numerous non-governmental organizations.

Nevertheless, as the BelaPAN news agency reported on 16 October 2010, according to Yu. Zagoumenov, "till the end of October, within the scope of the OSCE project, the creation of civil society's platforms on human rights will be initiated", and on November 14<sup>th</sup>, there will be an attempt to declare about the creation of the National platform of civil society.

In this connection, we protest against the headstrong approach to the creation of the human rights platform and the National platform of civil society without the interests and opinions of human rights organizations working in the country.

It is not clear how preparation for this action was carried out. Among the organizers, there are no biggest associations of non-governmental organizations, for example, such as the Assembly of non-governmental organizations, the Platform of non-governmental organizations of the Eastern Partnership, etc.

Human rights organizations, human rights groups, and separate human rights defenders have been working actively for more than ten years. The result of their joint work is civil campaigns such as "Human rights defenders for free elections", "Human rights defenders against capital punishment", "Campaign for alternative service", "Campaign to cancel 193.1", the existence of joint educational and human rights projects (School of human rights), the work of the Belarusian Human Rights House (in exile in Vilnius), the joint work of Belarusian NGOs to prepare an alternative report within the framework of preparation of the Universal periodic survey.

On 25 September 2010, there was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Forum of human rights organizations in which 18 human rights organizations from Belarus took part. Negotiations and consultations between human rights organizations are conducted constantly during Belarusian and international human rights meetings and events.

Thus, the real platform of Belarusian human rights initiatives exists not for the first year. Nevertheless, we notice almost the full absence of any desire of the Belarusian authorities to take into account the human rights defenders' opinion concerning the most important questions which concern the social, civil, and political rights of Belarusian citizens and the performance of the international duties in the field of human rights, accepted by the Republic of Belarus.

We declare that if the Belarusian authorities express their consent and desire to cooperate with human rights organizations, we are ready for such cooperation on the principles offered in the Concept of interaction of the state authorities and civil society, developed under the aegis of the NGOs Assembly. Human rights defenders will continue their work in order to strengthen human rights and development of democracy.

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