

**STATEMENT BY DELEGATIONS OF
DENMARK, ESTONIA, FINLAND, ICELAND,
LATVIA, LITHUANIA, NORWAY AND SWEDEN**

TO THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

on the situation in Belarus after the presidential election

We, the representatives of the Nordic-Baltic delegations to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,

strongly supporting the Belarusian people on their path towards democracy;

having observed that the Belarusian presidential election on 9 August 2020 did not comply with the international commitments of Belarus and globally recognized standards of democracy and rule of law, and they were not free and fair;

emphasizing that the right to participate in free elections is a fundamental principle of democracy and that freedom of speech and assembly are basic human rights;

emphasizing that current actions of the Belarusian authorities violate human rights and principles of democracy;

expressing concern about the repression and violence against representatives of civil society and independent mass media before, during, and after the presidential election;

condemning violence and brutality of the special police forces and authorities against demonstrators;

asserting that dialogue and reforms will improve the development of Belarus and promote good neighbourly relations in our region;

expressing deep regret that Belarus is not a member of the Council of Europe and the country's special guest status to the Council of Europe is still suspended;

the Parliamentary delegations of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

call on the Belarusian authorities to immediately end the use of force and persecution; release all political prisoners and persons who have been illegally detained; rehabilitate the released political

prisoners and fully restore their civil and political rights; to conduct an urgent and transparent investigation into acts of brutality carried out by law enforcement; and ensure adherence to democratic principles, human rights, and fundamental rights according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Belarus;

urge the Belarusian government to start immediate dialogue with the opposition and civil society and refrain from further violence;

urge the Belarusian government to launch without delay a peaceful dialogue to reform the electoral law;

urge the government of Belarus to recognise the people of Belarus' right to free and fair elections in line with international standards, while providing the opposition with equal access to all state-controlled mass media and allowing the opposition to participate in the election on equal footing; to ensure fair and genuine opportunities for all candidates to engage in pre-election campaigns; to ensure the presence of international observers, as well as equal representation of all candidates' supporters at all levels of electoral committees;

call on the Council of Europe member states governments to support the democratic reforms and the reinforcement of the democratic institutions of Belarus, in order to strengthen the democratic institutions, civil society, and independent media in Belarus;

call on the Council of Europe, with its expertise and experience, in cooperation with other international partners, to offer full support to Belarus on its path to democracy and necessary constitutional reforms;

reaffirm our continued support for the sovereignty of Belarus, well-being and fundamental rights of the Belarusian people.

Signatures:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Butkevičius', written in a cursive style.

Mr Algirdas Butkevičius
Chairperson of the Lithuanian delegation to PACE