

**SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS**

**SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**STATEMENT
ON EUROPEAN UNION SANCTIONS AGAINST BELARUS**

22 March 2023

Vilnius

The Committee on European Affairs of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania,

endorsing the positions of the Republic of Lithuania ahead of European Council meeting on 23 and 24 March 2023,

acting in view of the fact that:

– the European Union (hereinafter: the ‘EU’) sanctions against Belarus were imposed in 2020 and have been consistently strengthened in response to the violence by the Belarusian regime against peaceful protesters and systemic violations of human rights, also of the fact that they were subsequently supplemented in response to Belarus’ support for Russia’s large-scale invasion of Ukraine,

– the human rights situation in Belarus is not improving, with the regime holding 1 458 political prisoners imprisoned, continuing its repression of the civil society in Belarus (1 225 non-governmental organisations have been already dissolved), persecuting independent media and journalists in Belarus on the charge of extremism,

– the Belarusian regime continues and strengthens its support for Russia's war against Ukraine,

– the revenue from potash fertilisers was the main source of revenue for the Belarusian regime before the imposition of EU sanctions,

– the main transit route for Belarusian fertilisers before the imposition of EU sanctions was through Lithuania (75.6 per cent of the fertilisers produced in Belarus transited through the port of Klaipėda before the imposition of sanctions), therefore, the introduction of the derogation at EU level would lead to incredible pressure on Lithuania, which, in the interests of national security,

has no intention of allowing such transit through its sovereign territory,

– the food crisis argument used for lobbying purposes is a reflection of Russian propaganda aimed at blackmailing the international community, when in fact the impact of potash fertilisers on food security in African countries is very limited,

stress their strong opposition to any compromise which would ease the sanctions previously imposed on Belarus and leave room for the application of derogations in relation to Belarusian fertiliser oligarchs and undertakings;

note that Lithuania is and will remain ready to avail itself of the principle of unanimity;

propose that the President of the Republic of Lithuania and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania build a coalition of EU Member States directed against exemptions from EU sanctions against the criminal regimes of Russia and Belarus in order to prevent the adoption of any derogations;

call on other EU Member States to support the position of the Republic of Lithuania and not to approve the new package of sanctions against Belarus as long as the package contains the derogation in relation to sanctioned persons and undertakings engaged in the global trade in agricultural and food products, including fertilisers, as this derogation would significantly ease the EU sanctions imposed on the Belarusian regime for violations of human rights, restore a major source of revenue of the Belarusian regime and exert considerable pressure on the State of Lithuania, which, in the interests of national security, cannot allow transit of Belarusian fertilisers to third countries through its sovereign territory;

promote the initiation of negotiations on the lifting of all exemptions or derogations from EU sanctions against Russia and Belarus, in view of the issue by the International Criminal Court of an international arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin on 17 March 2023.

Chair of the Committee on European Affairs

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė

Deputy Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

Giedrius Surplys