

## **Joint statement by 19 states in support of the establishment of the International Accountability Platform for Belarus**

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Statement on behalf of Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America

*24 March 2021*

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As documented in the Moscow Mechanism report by OSCE Rapporteur Professor Benedek as well as the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports by international and Belarusian human rights institutions and civil society organisations, the Belarusian authorities have committed serious and unprecedented violations of international human rights law in Belarus before, during and after the presidential election on 9 August 2020. These violations include arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including sexual and gender-based violence. As one of the key recommendations in the Benedek report, it is vital to ensure accountability for the human rights violations in the context of the presidential elections.

We stand in solidarity with the Belarusian people in their demand for a democratic transition. We reaffirm our unequivocal condemnation of the systematic and gross human rights violations and abuses in Belarus as well as the disrespect for democratic principles and the rule of law. We will continue to hold Belarusian authorities to account and call for an end to the systematic oppression and persecution of peaceful and democratic movements and the immediate cessation of all violence, including the use of torture.

As human rights violations are reoccurring in a culture of impunity in Belarus on a daily basis there is an urgent need to ensure that evidence and documentation are collected and preserved in a secure and appropriate manner in accordance with international standards. The International Accountability Platform for Belarus (IAPB) has taken on the responsibility of the collection, consolidation, verification and preservation of information, documentation and evidence of serious violations of international human rights law committed in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and its aftermath. The IAPB will be led by DIGNITY – Danish Institute against Torture with co-leads Belarusian Human Rights Center VIASNA,

International Committee for Investigation of Torture in Belarus, and REDRESS. The IAPB will be supported by a number of independent Belarusian and international organizations, which have a track record in the area of documentation and investigation of torture and other violations of international human rights law.

We hereby provide our political support to this urgent action of IAPB. We also reaffirm our support for the establishment of a UN Human Rights Council mandated investigation under the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and supported by relevant experts, aimed at contributing to accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims in Belarus. The material collected by the IAPB will be handed over to such a UN investigation once operational. The documentation collected by the IAPB will also serve any future independent criminal investigations and criminal proceedings, in accordance with international law standards, in national, regional or international courts or tribunals that have or may in the future have jurisdiction over those crimes, in accordance with international law

We express our full support to the work of the IAPB as an important contribution to the efforts aimed at ensuring accountability in Belarus. We call upon other states, and encourage other international or local accountability initiatives, civil society and other relevant stakeholders, including Belarusian authorities, to cooperate fully with the IAPB for it to effectively carry out its work, to provide any form of assistance, including access to information and documentation, and invite states to help ensure the safety and security of the victims and witnesses of human rights violations in Belarus, members of the IAPB and the collected information, documentation and evidence.

The IAPB will carry out its work and functions independently and impartially.