



## **Statement of Ireland**

### **51<sup>st</sup> session of the Human Rights Council**

*Interactive Dialogue on the interim oral update of OHCHR on the situation of human rights in Belarus*

**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September**

Ireland aligns with the statement of the EU and thanks the Acting High Commissioner for her update.

It is now just over two years since the fraudulent re-election of Mr Alexander Lukashenko, and the massive wave of popular protests—and repression of those involved—that followed.

During that time, the numbers of political prisoners detained has climbed steadily. The already limited space for civil society and political debate has been nearly eradicated. The authorities have persecuted human rights defenders, journalists, trade unionists, media workers, lawyers, and ordinary citizens who voice any criticism of the system.

Ireland deplores recent changes to the penal code, introducing the death penalty for so-called “attempted acts of terrorism”. These “terrorism charges” are ill-defined and have been applied to a wide variety of activists in Belarus. The number of innocent people sentenced to death is thus likely to increase. We urge Belarus to introduce a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, and join international efforts towards its universal abolition.

Ireland urges Belarus to unconditionally release all political prisoners, halt its repression of dissent, engage in an inclusive national dialogue with all sectors of society, and end its involvement in Russia’s war on Ukraine.

*Acting High Commissioner, in light of the continually deteriorating situation, can you outline priorities for the mandate going forward?*

Thank you