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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Letter dated 23 May 2011 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council and has the honour to enclose herewith a letter by the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus, Mikhail Khvostov, with a kind request to the President of the Council to circulate the above-mentioned letter* as a document of the seventeenth session.

* Reproduced in the annex, as received and in the language of submission only.

Annex

Geneva, May 23, 2011

Excellency,

On 19 December 2010 there was an attempted coup d'état in the Republic of Belarus organized by some ex-presidential candidates with the support of their proponents. Belarusian authorities took forceful measures to subdue that attempted coup d'état.

We see the events of 19 December 2010 as a direct and clear threat to the constitutional order in the Republic of Belarus together with the achievements that the Belarusian people was able to make over a short period of its independence.

Belarus, European Union and a number of other countries have divergent views over the events of 19 December. The EU interprets those events exclusively from the angle of its own political interests, while we proceed from the supremacy of law and the right of the Belarusian people to elect its leaders. The people of Belarus elected Alexander Lukashenko as President of the country. No one has the right to challenge the expressed public will. International law does guarantee individuals the right to freedom of peaceful assembly only. Once that right is exercised through violence leading to public disorder legal consequences become a logical result thereof in any rule-of-law state.

In her statement of 21 December 2010 (HC10/066E) Ms. Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, condemned "any calls for or resort to violence on the part of some radical factions in the opposition" in the context of the attempted forceful seizure of the Government building.

The persons, including some ex-candidates for presidency, who were involved in masterminding and participating in mass disturbances and the attempted seizure of the House of Government and Parliament, were made criminally or administratively accountable. The actions of the Belarusian side are determined by the provisions of law and legal norms conforming to the generally adopted practice. In a spirit of transparency the Belarusian authorities took an unprecedented decision allowing the OSCE monitors to attend court proceedings relating to the events of 19 December.

All citizens of Belarus, regardless of their political or social status, are equal before the law. In this regard, any attempts to present perpetrators as human rights activists or political prisoners are unacceptable.

The actions of Western countries are based on flagrant hushing up of the aggression and violence of the demonstrators. We consider the intention of that group of countries to justify publicly dangerous violations of law as encouragement of lawlessness and extremism.

The U.S. and the EU imposed unilateral sanctions against Belarus and its citizens in disregard of the United Nations Charter and principles of international law.

The situation around Belarus is being deliberately fuelled up in the Human Rights Council, including the use of its mechanisms. A group of Western countries is trying to present the pressure exerted on Belarus as a "dialogue" while at the same time doing everything they can to derail such dialogue.

On the eve of the 16th HRC session we were proposed to hold an informal briefing on the events of 19 December. On 14 March, 2011 already, without waiting for the reply of the Belarusian side, the sponsors of that proposal spoke with criticism against Belarus reading out a joint statement on behalf of a group of countries on the human rights situation in Belarus.

Such an approach cannot converge the positions of parties and will not help further dialogue on human rights issues.

Pressure on Belarus with the use of HRC mechanisms as encouraged by a group of Western countries has no future and practical value. Such measures are nothing but yet another link in the chain of examples of double standards undermining confidence in the Council from UN Member States.

Belarus calls upon Western countries to give up confrontational approaches in order to promote and protect human rights on the principles of cooperation and genuine dialogue as envisaged in the UNGA resolution 60/251.

As it was observed in the statement by the Belarus Foreign Ministry of 31 January, 2010, "joint efforts to overcome the current difficulties in relations with the EU which emerged through no fault of the Belarusian authorities are in the common interests of Belarus and the EU and contribute to consolidation of the all-European unity in the face of new challenges and risks".

Belarus is a proponent of partnership with the European Union and other countries on the basis of open, fair and mutually respectful dialogue. At the same time, we shall continue to work with foreign partners so that they form an objective idea of the events that took place in Minsk on 19 December, 2010.

I would appreciate, Mr. President, if you could circulate the present letter as an official document of the 17th HRC session under item 3 of the agenda.

Mikhail Khvostov
Ambassador
Permanent Representative