Belarus

Norway

Thank you Chair,

Norway is deeply concerned with the way the Belarusian authorities have responded to the recent peaceful protests taking place throughout Belarus.

The arbitrary and indiscriminate actions of the Belarusian authorities included numerous detentions, arrest of opposition leaders, intimidation of journalists and activists of independent organizations, including the Human Rights Centre "Viasna" and apparently as we have just heard also environmental activists from the NGO Ecohome. We express our deepest sympathy with those present here that were among these activists.

There is no justification for the use of force or intimidation against those exercising their right to peaceful protest. Such repressive actions are in contradiction with Belarus’ stated policy of democratisation and its international commitments. This also includes its commitments as Party to the Aarhus Convention to the extent that such actions are taken against the public exercising their rights to making their voices heard through access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters.

We therefore support the call just made for the Chair to send a letter to Belarus expressing these concerns.

As recently expressed through our support to a statement made in the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe, observance of democratic standards, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression, association and assembly, are the basis on which Norway wants to build stable relations with Belarus. Norway remains committed to a stable, democratic and prosperous future
for Belarus, for the benefit of its people, and will continue its work with all the stakeholders with this objective firmly in mind.