

## **Statement**

### **UPR Pre-session on Belarus**

**Geneva 29 August 2025**

**Delivered by the Belarusian National Youth Council RADA**

#### *Slide 1*

Dear distinguished Members of the UN Human Rights Council, Dear Colleagues,  
It is a pleasure to greet you here,

#### *Slide 2*

This statement is delivered on behalf of RADA and the youth organizations that contributed to the UPR, focusing on youth rights. RADA, a voluntary union of 44 youth organizations in Belarus, works to represent, promote, and defend the interests and freedoms of youth organizations and young people. This is RADA's second contribution to the UPR process.

#### *Slide 3*

### **1. Overview of the Situation Since Last UPR**

- RADA, already operating in exile, was later designated an “extremist formation” by the authorities and excluded from the UPR national consultations.
- Since the previous UPR there has been little to no positive progress regarding youth rights and participation. Longstanding concerns, such as restrictions on freedom of assembly and association, discrimination, and lack of meaningful youth participation, remain unaddressed. While these issues predate 2020, the situation has significantly deteriorated following the presidential election in 2020, with Belarusian youth facing an unprecedented wave of repression. Job dismissals, expulsion, arbitrary arrests and systematic targeting of youth organizations have severely impacted Belarusian youth's ability to exercise their human rights. It is crucial to mention that at least 267 young political prisoners remain behind bars, a figure large enough to equal the youth of a small town, while nearly 1,000 more once lived behind those same walls.
- Based on our colleagues' statements during this pre-session, RADA affirms that the identified violations and recommendations are equally relevant to youth and wishes to highlight the following issues.

#### *Slide 4*

### **2. Right to education**

#### *2.1 Freedom of association and freedom of assembly*

- Obstacles to exercising the right to education are closely linked to the violations of other human rights.
- Young people continue to be forcibly pressured to join pro-governmental student and youth organizations, a concern that was raised by RADA during the previous UPR but remains

unaddressed by the authorities. Freedom of association is severely restricted, with independent student groups facing constant surveillance and pressure.

- Moreover, demonstrations on campuses are effectively banned. Students who participate in such demonstrations are subjected to harsh reprisals, including arrests and expulsions from their universities.

#### *Slide 5*

#### *2.2 Right to equality and non-discrimination*

- Another ongoing concern is persistent inequality in higher education. Gender discrimination continues through disproportionate quotas favoring male students in military, internal affairs, and emergency institutions, as well as in medical sub-internships.
- Access for students with disabilities remains limited due to inadequate physical infrastructure, lack of communication support, and restrictive admission procedures.
- Belarus maintains compulsory military service for young men. While deferments remain available for students enrolled in domestic universities, a new law removes this exemption for those pursuing education abroad, forcing them to either delay their studies or risk conscription or prosecution upon returning, thereby restricting their right to education. All these issues were previously raised by RADA but left unaddressed.

#### *Slide 6*

##### **Recommendations**

During the 3rd UPR cycle, Belarus received no recommendations on higher education. Considering the concerns outlined, we call on member states to place it on their agenda and recommend that Belarusian authorities address these issues promptly:

- Guarantee students' rights to peaceful assembly and association by lifting restrictions on campus demonstrations, ending political persecution of students, and ceasing the forced involvement in pro-governmental organizations.
- Ensure full accessibility in higher education for students with disabilities through improved infrastructure, enhanced communication support, and modern assistive technologies.

#### *Slide 7*

- Abolish discriminatory quotas in admissions and medical training to secure equal, merit-based access for all students regardless of gender.
- Reinstate educational deferments for students studying abroad and explore non-military public service options to uphold the right to education.

#### *Slide 8*

We welcome the opportunity to further discuss this statement and thank you for your attention. The Belarusian youth dedicate considerable effort to raising awareness of various human rights violations of young people.