



30th session of the
Human Rights Council

Item 6

UPR outcomes Belarus
24 September 2015
Delivered by Renate Bloem

Thank you, Mr. President

CIVICUS welcomes Belarus' cooperation with the UPR process and has acutely heard the Government's presentation this morning.

During Belarus' second UPR Review in May, CIVICUS partners from the ground shed light on the restrictions that had been adopted by the Belarusian government since its first Review, further impeding the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. The human rights situation had not only not improved as compared to 2011 but had deteriorated further as a result of repressive practices such as arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, abductions and continued harassment of human rights defenders.

We are all the more very keen to learn what the Belarus Government intends to do with recommendations which now have been indicated in the addendum as **accepted in part**. We refer to the cluster of paras dealing with the rights

- to freedom of expression, assembly and association, 129.78; 129;81;
- to peaceful protest, 129;90
- to facilitate the registration of NGOs and to decriminalize the organization and participation in activities of unregistered associations by repealing article 193-1 of the Criminal Code 129,72

CIVICUS has been active to advocate for the abolishment of this most debilitating article for a vibrant CS since the first UPR. We also refer

- to amend its electoral laws to bring them in line with the OSCE recommendations for electoral reform to demonstrate respect for democratic political processes...129,94

In this context we welcome the release of six political prisoners on 22 August, unfortunately one day after the deadline and too late for participation in the run up for the presidential election on 11 October.

CIVICUS asks the Belarus Government whether all the **in part accepted** recommendations will be implemented and will mark a change in the policy and direction of the country or whether they are just a cover-up to silence critical voices in the pre-election period. As a first we ask to

- allow independent civil society monitors to observe the elections later this year

Thank you Mr. President