

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/1333/21  
2 September 2021

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of Belarus

## **STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF BELARUS AT THE OSCE ANNUAL SECURITY REVIEW CONFERENCE**

1 September 2021

### **Working session II: Transnational threats – current and future trends in the OSCE area and beyond**

We regret that instead of discussing important substantive issues together, some colleagues are using this session to replicate unsubstantiated accusations against Belarus and its leadership.

First, we are forced to note that the distinguished Lithuanian representative is trying to mislead us by misquoting the utterances of our Head of State, who pointed out that in the face of the large-scale sanctions imposed by the West we are obliged to concentrate our resources primarily on counteracting external threats to border security, giving priority to curbing illegal activities directed against the Republic of Belarus.

In addition, our Lithuanian colleagues, instead of searching jointly for a solution to migration problems, stoop to absurd accusations that we are deliberately passing asylum seekers onto Lithuanian territory, trying in this way to shift responsibility for Lithuania's blunders in border protection onto Belarus.

Moreover, paying no heed to the principles of bilateral, mutually beneficial co-operation in border protection, Lithuania has resorted to the most radical methods to solve the migration problem.

Contrary to the agreements in force, Lithuania is thus illegally bringing refugees who have sought asylum in Lithuania to the border and forcibly pushing them into the territory of Belarus.

Not only is this a direct violation of the provisions of the Treaty between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Lithuania on the Belarusian-Lithuanian State border regime, whereby persons detained by one of the parties may not be transferred to the other if they have applied for asylum, but it is also well beyond the bounds of international refugee law and, ultimately, of universal ethical principles.

These actions are often accompanied by physical force and special restraining measures against migrants. The threat of using weapons and setting police dogs on them is designed as a means of intimidation.

I am sure that everyone is aware of the consequences of these actions. The inhumane and brutal conduct of Lithuanian security forces have already resulted in the death of one migrant and endangered the lives of several others. Unfortunately, there are pregnant women and children among them.

Lithuania's actions violate international law and go against the democratic principles that underpin European policies.

It might also be mentioned that the imposition by the European Union of sanctions, including sector-based economic and air embargoes, against Belarus, is contrary to international law and OSCE commitments.

The EU's winding down of cross-border co-operation projects on border issues and international technical assistance is having a significant impact on the situation by reducing our ability to physically stop the flow of people fleeing war and hunger in their countries. We have approached the European Commission on several occasions with proposals for holding relevant consultations, but so far there has been no response.

It is possible for people to make up all kinds of muddled fictions, but the border should be a "line of co-operation", and any issues arising along its length can be successfully resolved only by means of mutually respectful dialogue. Incidentally, the rise in drug trafficking remains a serious challenge to our common security, and we must also work together on this problem.

Once again, we believe it needs to be pointed out that the phenomenon under consideration represents a constant challenge to all OSCE participating States. It can be met only by working together rather than building fences and deepening the dividing lines in the OSCE area or imposing sanctions, closing the skies, and so on.

We have always been a reliable partner in the various areas of co-operation and will remain so, but not to the detriment of Belarusian national interests. This approach requires constructive steps from the other side.

In general, we have the impression that with its constant insinuations and persistent attempts to shift all the blame onto Belarus, Lithuania is simply trying to camouflage its unwillingness to accept migrants and to respect their rights. Actions of this kind – both with regard to the treatment of migrants and to changes in its asylum legislation – have even prompted reactions by the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

It is our understanding that respecting the rights of refugees falls within the humanitarian dimension. With the agenda of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw not yet agreed upon, it would be logical to consider the utility of extending it to take account of this issue.