



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN BELARUS

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 19 November 2020

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

Last week Raman Bandarenka, an activist believing in a different future for Belarus and its people, was killed by thugs. I do not know whether these thugs were plainclothes police, as some reports state, or not, as Belarusian authorities state. For Mr. Bandarenka it is of less importance. But, whoever killed Mr. Bandarenka, believed they could get away with it, as widespread impunity for crimes against activists reigns in Belarus. This impunity must end. Those responsible for Mr. Bandarenka's death, both his killers and those who condone such violence, must be held to justice for what they have done.

Whenever there is unrest and uncertainty, the need for information increases. For a foreign, accredited diplomat, observing and reporting on developments is a duty. Instead of accepting this, Belarus has decided to expel diplomats for doing their job. We strongly encourage Belarusian authorities to allow diplomats, journalists and representatives from civil society to work freely in the country.

Mr. Chair,

For more than a hundred days now, ordinary citizens of Belarus have made their voices heard in the streets. Students have spoken out in their universities. Factory workers have expressed their disappointment. They have been met by brutal apprehensions, fines and threats of layoffs. This is a sign of fear, not of confidence. Of despair, not of

strength. The brutality, expulsions and threats must end. Unwillingness to listen to people leads to continued protests. It will not end until there is a proper dialogue. The present, and the incoming, Chairperson-in-office, have offered to facilitate such dialogue. We strongly encourage the authorities in Minsk to accept the offer.

Thank you