

## Civil society Statement on Belarus VNR, read by a representative of the Women's Major Group

The just presented VNR was compiled without any involvement of non-governmental stakeholders. It is no accident. Since 2020, the regime has eliminated more than 760 NGOs, including members of the Sustainability Partner Group. As a result, VNR findings do not stand the reality check.

Despite all repressions Belarusian civil society managed to prepare an alternative report to highlight what's actually happening in Belarus.

Our report was prepared in collaboration with policy specialist, NGOs, and experts. Notably, many experts chose to stay anonymous since an alternative opinion leads to prison.

Civic activists can be charged with extremism or intent to commit an act of terrorism, and now in Belarus it leads to the death penalty. There are thousands of political prisoners in Belarus now. My mother Valeriya Kostyugova is a political scientist and a political prisoner for already more than a year. How can civil society contribute to SDG implementation and have a safe and open dialogue when all political institutions including parliament and judiciary are controlled by the regime?

Another disturbing indicator is that the regime bluntly manipulates statistics to portray Belarus as a happy and prosperous country. How can society address its problems without full access to objective information?

Repressions affect stakeholders working on all SDGs in Belarus. How the regime plans to achieve progress on SDGs when institutions are destroyed and basic human rights are violated systematically?

For the record, our report contains more than 260 recommendations to make a real difference on all SDGs. And we will not stop until we create conditions to implement these recommendations in Belarus. On this path, we will rely on the support of member states.

Thank you.