

# Human rights in Belarus: Joint statement to the OSCE

Mr. Chair, I am delivering this statement on behalf of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, the United States, and my own country Canada.

Two years ago, on 5 November 2020, Professor Wolfgang Benedek presented the [independent report on the human rights situation in Belarus under the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism](#) to the Permanent Council. The conclusions were clear: The 9 August presidential election was neither free nor fair, and “massive and systematic” violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms had been committed by the Belarusian security forces.

One year ago, on 4 November 2021, as a response to the deteriorating human rights situation and the Belarusian authorities' failure to respond satisfactorily to the recommendations addressed to them in the Moscow Mechanism report, [a group of 35 OSCE participating States invoked the Vienna \(Human Dimension\) Mechanism requesting information on a number of serious concerns](#). Unfortunately, one year later, we today note with regret that the recommendations for Belarusian authorities in the Moscow Mechanism report remain unaddressed, and our concerns for the human rights situation in Belarus are more dire than ever.

Over the past two years, the authorities in Belarus have continued their brutal and unprecedented crackdown on defenders of democracy in Belarus, including civil society and independent voices. The exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, is severely repressed, and those attempting to act on those rights and freedoms are systematically detained, abused, and subjected to other forms of intimidation and only harassment. According to credible reports, the number of political prisoners is now more than 1,350. This includes many ordinary Belarusians who simply protested in 2020; journalists, media actors, opposition figures, and human rights defenders, sentenced in some cases to well over a decade simply for exercising their fundamental rights. As a consequence, tens of thousands of Belarusians have been, and continue to be, forced to flee the country, to leave their homes and in some cases loved ones behind due to the untenable situation.

In addition, several credible, international reports have documented the continued pervasive use of torture and other ill-treatment. The Belarusian authorities have further increased harassment and intimidation efforts by widening of the scope of the death penalty to vaguely defined “attempted terrorist activities”. This is an alarming step, the real objective of which is to further increase repression against defenders of democracy. Mr. Chair,

In the initial letter invoking the Vienna Mechanism on 4 November 2021, we asked for information from the Belarusian authorities on a number of concerns, including on the credible reports on continuing unjust arrests and detentions, as well as the targeting of opposition figures. The Belarusian Delegation's reply did not acknowledge our legitimate concerns on any of these issues; for example, the Belarusian Delegation simply took exception to the term 'political prisoner'.

The inadequate responses we have continued to receive from the Belarusian authorities, combined with the deteriorating developments we have witnessed over the past year, clearly demonstrate there is no change in approach by the Belarusian authorities.

On the contrary, in recent months, the Belarusian authorities have intensified the brutal and unprecedented repression of the Belarusian people, and has on top of that been facilitating Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in violation of international law.

Mr. Chair,

Even as the human rights situation in Belarus has continued to deteriorate, the Belarusian Delegation has often claimed to seek dialogue on these issues here in the Permanent Council. The Vienna Mechanism is a tool for such dialogue, but it requires the Belarusian authorities to engage substantially, realistically and honestly on the subject. It requires the Belarusian authorities to recognise our legitimate continuing concerns, which mirrors those of civil society, independent media, and human rights defenders.

Against this backdrop, we repeat our questions raised under the OSCE Vienna Mechanism in the Permanent Council. We encourage the Belarusian authorities to consider these questions carefully and to provide genuine answers to this Council, including a detailed explanation of their reactions to the recommendations contained in the 5 November 2020 report under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism.

Finally, we call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners in Belarus. We urge the Belarusian authorities to fully implement their international obligations and OSCE commitments, and to make use of the OSCE's tools and mechanisms to help resolve the continuing human rights crisis.

Thank you.

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**[Wrong side signalling failure at](#)**

# Wingfield

News story

Wrong side signalling failure at Wingfield, Derbyshire, 26 October 2022.



Signal DY586 and its signalling location cabinet

On the morning of 26 October 2022, a signal at Wingfield in Derbyshire (which had been disconnected and reconnected the previous night as part of planned track maintenance work) was returned to service with a fault. This fault caused a wrong side failure, with the signal's red and yellow aspects being displayed incorrectly.

The fault initially caused a train to pass the signal at danger, which stopped in the track section beyond the signal. It later resulted in a second train being signalled at caution into the track section where the first train was still stopped. The second train was running at slow speed and being driven at caution, and came to a stop 75 metres from the first train. No damage or injury was caused by the incident.

We have undertaken a [preliminary examination](#) into the circumstances surrounding this incident. Having assessed the evidence which has been gathered to date, we have decided to publish a [safety digest](#).

The safety digest will be made available on our website in the near future.

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# Construction and coaching bosses banned for Covid loan abuse

Bosses of a London construction company and a Greater Manchester sports coaching firm have each been banned from running a business for 11 years after abusing Bounce Back Loans.

Lavinia-Larisa Mociar, 31, claimed £50,000 to support the Harrow-based construction business of which she was a director. However, the business had ceased trading when the application was made.

And Shafiqur Rahman, 26, and chair of a local charity, had exaggerated the turnover of his Manchester-based sports coaching business to claim £25,000

But the amount received by Aspire Sports Coaching & Partners Ltd was more than 11 times the money to which the business was entitled and Rahman spent £20,000 of it without being able to prove it had been used to support the company.

Under the rules of the scheme, businesses applying for the loan had to be actively trading by March 2020. Companies could apply for loans of up to 25% of their 2019 turnover, to a maximum of £50,000, to help keep their business afloat during the pandemic.

Lavinia-Larisa Mociar, originally from Romania, was the sole director of L&M Construct Ltd until the company went into liquidation in November 2021.

However L&M Construct Ltd had stopped trading in October 2019 – a year before Mociar applied for the Bounce Back Loan, which was meant to help support businesses through the pandemic.

Investigators discovered that not only had L&M Construct Ltd not been trading in 2020, but that Mociar had also exaggerated the company's turnover to claim the maximum £50,000. There had been less than £50 in the company's bank account when the loan was deposited in October 2020.

Mociar then withdrew more than £50,000 from the company account before the end of 2020 – a further abuse of the scheme, as the money was not being used for the economic benefit of the business.

The company went into liquidation owing around £50,000, including the full amount of the loan.

Manchester-based Shafiqur Rahman was director of Aspire Sports Coaching & Partners Ltd, which provided sport programmes and activities to primary schools and holiday clubs across Greater Manchester.

Rahman was also the founder and chair of Oldham Inspiring Youth, a charity which aimed to engage children through sports and education, and which had crowd-funded a yellow school bus to be used as a community educational space

in Oldham.

He applied for a Bounce Back Loan of £25,000 in May 2020 to support Aspire Sports Coaching through the pandemic lockdowns, when most children were not in school. The business folded in May 2021, which triggered an investigation by the Insolvency Service.

Investigators found that, based on the company's actual turnover, Aspire Sports Coaching & Partners should only have been eligible for a Bounce Back Loan of £2,000, and the company had received £23,000 to which it hadn't been entitled.

Investigators also discovered that Rahman had paid £20,000 out of the company, and had given a false invoice for the amount to liquidators to try to account for the unexplained payment. The business closed with debts of £25,000 – the full amount of the loan money.

The Secretary of State accepted disqualification undertakings from both errant bosses, and they were each given bans of 11 years. Rahman's ban began on 11 October this year, and Mociar's started on 8 November 2022.

The disqualifications prevent the two former directors from directly, or indirectly, becoming involved in the promotion, formation or management of a company, without the permission of the court.

Tom Phillips, Assistant Director of Investigation and Enforcement Services for the Insolvency Service, said,

These directors blatantly abused the Government's Bounce Back Loan rescue scheme.

The lengthy disqualifications should serve as a reminder to others that the Insolvency Service will not shirk from its responsibility in taking action in order to protect the public and the taxpayer".

## **Notes to editors**

Lavinia-Larisa Mociar is of Harrow and her date of birth is July 1991.

L&M Construct Ltd (Company Reg no. 11346012).

Shafiqur Rahman is of Oldham and his date of birth is October 1996;

Aspire Sports Coaching & Partners Ltd (Company Reg no. 11179915).

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership

- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings.

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/corporate-insolvency-effect-of-a-disqualification-order>).

[Information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct.](#)

## Contact Press Office

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

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# [Boost to biodiversity as thousands of trees are planted on the British Army training estate in Kenya](#)

DIO's Safe Place to Train team and Kenyan Support Staff organised an Environmental Week to tackle a decline in the number of trees on BATUK training areas in Laikipia County and the Archer's Post region. With the help of volunteers from the local communities BATUK shares its land with, a total of 3900 tree saplings were planted and over 10,000 'seedballs' were scattered.

The seedballs were created by coating seeds within a protective ball made primarily of charcoal dust, which protects them from damage and animals when germinating. By scattering seeds using this method, it can take as little as a month for new plants to be established in previously barren areas.

DIO personnel worked with landowners to develop an understanding of which species of trees would be the best for the local region, as well as the ideal locations to plant them within each training area.

The DIO team also attended a number of schools and colleges to encourage staff and children to take part in the "Adopt a Tree" programme. It is hoped that these visits will help ensure the survivability of the trees once planted, by inspiring the younger generation to build on the Environmental Week's success.

The project was jointly developed by W02 Phillip Kent, a DIO Training Safety Marshall and reservist serving in 8 RIFLES, and Melita Loigisa, Senior Range

Warden in the DIO team's Kenyan Support Staff.

**W02 Kent said:**

"Restoring trees to the Kenyan landscape is vital in counteracting the devastating decline in the number and diversity of trees due to land degradation and biological invasion by non-native plants. By working closely with local communities, we can help to ensure the long-term sustainable development of our training estate in Kenya."

**Melita Loigisa said:**

"I've seen a dramatic decline in the wooded areas of Laikipia County and the Archers Post region over the last 20 years. The DIO team has given me the platform as the Senior Range Warden to assist in restoring these important natural habitats.

"The 'Adopt a tree' initiative is something I am particularly passionate about, as it's vital for the younger generation to understand the importance of our environment and the impact we have on it. Although this project is a small step, if its success is sustained it will improve the environment for all communities in the region."

A variety of trees were planted, including some species which could only be planted in certain areas. The sapling species used throughout the project were: Yellow Fever Tree, Umbrella Thorn, Juniperous Africana, Wait a Bit Tree, Balanites Aegyptiaca, Olea Africana and Neem.

Land degradation in Kenya is a serious problem caused by overgrazing, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and the adverse effects of climate change.

DIO's Kenya team has continued to increase its environmental and sustainability performance in recent years. In addition to planting native trees and aloes across the BATUK training areas, enhancements have been targeted in recycling and waste management.

W02 Kent pictured with members of the local community and personnel from the DIO team's Kenyan Support Staff. Crown Copyright / MOD 2022.

DIO and BATUK continue to work with and support the local community with initiatives such as rainwater harvesting and borehole solar conversions. While BATUK already uses solar thermal energy across its estate, an assessment study to see how renewable energy technology such as solar photovoltaic panels can be used to reduce BATUK's carbon footprint will take place in 2023.

**Brigadier Jonathan Bartholomew OBE, DIO Head Overseas and Training Region said:**

"Ensuring that military training takes full account of the environmental

sensitivity of each training area is vital in order for training to be sustainable across the Laikipia and Samburu counties.

“My team continues to build a strong working relationship with the community, and has benefited from the technical support of environmental specialists from organisations such as the National Museum of Kenya, the University of Nairobi and Mpala Research Centre over the past decade. We are proud to be able to support these initiatives and contribute to the sustainable management of these internationally important areas.”

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## [Global agreement in green tech will open doors for UK PLC](#)

The UK is today leading a global agreement to make green technologies cheaper and more accessible around the world, while also creating green jobs for generations both at home and abroad, Grant Shapps said today (11 November).

Speaking at the COP27 negotiations in Egypt, the Business Secretary announced over £65 million investment to help speed up the development of new green technologies – backed by the talent and expertise of British business.

This builds on the legacy of COP26 in Glasgow, where the UK founded a coalition of countries to scale and speed up the development and deployment of clean technologies and drive down costs this decade, known as the Breakthrough Agenda.

Mr Shapps said it will be the efforts of entrepreneurs, innovators and the international community that will help cut global emissions in the coming decade and achieve net zero by 2050 – something today’s investments will help achieve.

These measures will help expand a whole global market in clean energy technologies, making them accessible and affordable to developing countries – and enabling UK companies to share their talent and expertise in this vital and growing industry.

Business Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Green means growth, and with our existing talents in clean technologies, UK businesses could be world leaders in an industry that will only expand, creating jobs for generations to come while also protecting our precious planet.

At COP27 we are leading international efforts to ensure these new innovations can be more accessible and affordable to heavy, energy-



intensive industries in some of the world's poorest countries.

These agreements are a key part of us achieving our net zero targets and our global efforts to cut emissions – but I am also proud that they will mean more countries will benefit from the knowledge and expertise we have nurtured here on UK shores.

The UK is already a world leader in the latest green technologies, ranging from the development of hydrogen as an alternative fuel, to the manufacture of electric vehicles.

Today's announcements not only highlight the UK's leading position on tackling climate change, they also show how this country is influencing international markets to go greener, in a way that gives the UK an advantage over other countries in delivering jobs, growth and investment in the UK.

The Business Secretary today announced:

- that the UK has built a coalition of governments, representing more than half of global GDP, who will take forward actions to speed up the development of new alternatives to fossil fuels for the carbon-intensive sectors, so that by 2030 they use the cheapest and most attractive options available to businesses in emerging and developing economies
- a UK pledge of £65 million towards the world's first large scale Industry Transition Programme, by the Climate Investment Funds, to support energy-intensive industries in developing economies including India and Indonesia to go green
- UK government's support, alongside Germany, for a new funding window for projects developing innovative and transformational clean technologies. Set to open in 2023, this funding from the Mitigation Action Facility will go to key priority sectors – energy, transport and industry – identified in the Breakthrough Agenda at COP27. This will support developing countries to achieve their goals for tackling climate change and reducing emissions

This comes on top of the Prime Minister's announcement of a further £65.5 million for the Clean Energy Innovation Facility, which provides grants to researchers and scientists to accelerate the development of innovative clean energy technologies in developing countries. Since the UK-led fund was launched in 2019 it has so far supported 76 projects, including the creation of biomass-powered refrigeration in India, prototype lithium-ion batteries in Nigeria and clean hydrogen-based fuels for steel production in Morocco, among other innovations. Its beneficiaries have praised the programme for its ability to identify business and community needs as it unlocks innovation opportunities.

## **Breakthrough Agenda**

The Breakthrough Agenda was agreed at COP26 in Glasgow between the UK and 46 other countries to help some of the highest emitting sectors of the global economy to decarbonise. At COP27, a coalition of governments representing

more than half of global GDP will launch the Breakthrough Agenda Priority Actions, which will support the key sectors of power, road transport, steel, hydrogen and agriculture, working to decarbonise them by 2030 by making clean technology in those sectors affordable and accessible to all.

The programme announced today are:

### **Climate Investment Funds' Industry Transition Programme**

- the CIF Industry Transition programme aims to overcome the challenges of decarbonisation within the industrial sector (with a focus on manufacturing sectors such as iron, steel, cement, glass, chemicals and petrochemicals, pulp and paper, and mining). This is especially important as heavy industry has shifted to emerging and developing countries, where there are huge differences in technological standards and regulations, and where the Industrial sector is expected to become the largest source of emissions within a decade
- a country of expression interest will be launched shortly after COP27

### **Climate Investment Funds (CIF)**

- the UK is the largest investor and a founding member of the multilateral Climate Investment Funds (CIF), which speeds up climate action in clean energy and transport technology, energy access, Nature and climate adaptation and resilience. It works exclusively through Multilateral Development Banks as implementing partners

On Monday 7 November at COP27, the Prime Minister announced up to £65.5 million to expand the UK's Clean Energy Innovation Facility (CEIF):

- the Facility aims to accelerate the commercialisation of innovative clean energy technologies in developing countries and the expansion is a key part of the UK government's £1 billion Ayrton Fund commitment for clean energy research, development and demonstration (RD&D) in countries eligible to receive Official Development Assistance (ODA)
- the existing £50 million CEIF programme was launched in 2019 and currently contains 4 thematic funds, managed by leading delivery partners in those themes: sustainable cooling innovation (International Finance Corporation), industrial decarbonisation innovation (World Bank), energy storage innovation (Innovate UK) and smart energy innovation (Asian Development Bank)

### **Mitigation Action Facility (previously known as the NAMA Facility)**

- the NAMA Facility (NF) is a multi-donor fund established in 2012 by the United Kingdom and Germany later joined by Denmark, the European Commission, and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)
- Germany and the UK both contribute approximately 45% of funding to NF
- on 11 November 2022 NF's new name 'Mitigation Action Facility' was presented at COP27
- the overarching aim of Mitigation Action Facility is to enable ODA-eligible countries to reduce their emissions through implementing

sectoral decarbonisation projects as building blocks of NDC implementation

- the Facility awards high value grants (up to EUR 25 million) to projects that have a combination of a permanent policy shift (to create an enabling environment) and capital investment to create financing offers for scaling up deployment of clean technologies
- the projects must have a government sponsor, so it provides an effective diplomatic tool to our teams at Post for bilateral engagement.
- going forward the Mitigation Action Facility will be focused on energy, industry and transport sectors – supporting the Breakthrough Agenda Report recommendations