

**71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly
Third Committee**

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Belarus

**Statement by Ireland
27 October 2016**

Mr. Chair

Ireland welcomes Special Rapporteur Miklos Haraszti and thanks him for his comprehensive report on the current human rights situation in Belarus in the context of the recent parliamentary elections.

The work of the Special Rapporteur is of vital importance and Ireland deeply regrets that Belarus continues to deny the Special Rapporteur access to the country or to engage with him on his mandate.

Whilst we recognise that the elections were efficiently organised and were conducted in a peaceful manner, we agree with the Special Rapporteur's analysis that the elections held in September do not indicate any systemic improvement with regard to human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law in Belarus and that the situation remains one of deep concern.

Released political prisoners have not had their civil or political rights restored and were unable to participate fully in the parliamentary elections. Serious restrictions exist on freedom of assembly, expression and association, including barriers to the registration of political parties. Such restrictions mean that the recent elections cannot be viewed as compliant with international human rights standards.

We urge Belarus to fully implement the Special Rapporteur's recommendations, as well as those of the OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe.

Finally, we would like to draw on the expertise of the Special Rapporteur to ask him the following question: what are the key steps which need to be taken by the Government of Belarus to ensure genuine and sustainable reform of the electoral process in line with international human rights standards?

Thank you.