

## **Draft program to support members of the striking movement as well as citizens and businesses affected by repressions**

The political crisis in Belarus undermines the confidence of people and enterprises in State institutions and aggravates existing imbalances in the economy. Over the past ten years, the economy of Belarus has almost stopped developing. In 2011-2020, it grew by 0.9% per year on average, 3-4 times slower than the global economy. After 26 years of Lukashenka's rule, Belarus became the country with the lowest minimum wage and the third-lowest average wage in Europe (after Moldova and Ukraine, which could overtake Belarus in 2021). Our economic growth prospects remain the worst in the region. The situation is deteriorated by the regime's cooling relationships with democratic countries. If the situation remains unchanged, Belarus will experience an increasing regression in the world economy every year.

The results of authorities' activities in 2011-2020 can be called the "lost decade" for Belarus. Against the background of repressions after the rigged elections of 2020, every day of illegitimate regime's rule has a negative impact on society and economy (reduction of employment in state-owned enterprises and the public services sector, closure and/or relocation of businesses, emigration of qualified specialists, increase of budget deficit, debts of state-owned enterprises and public debt). All this has led to the fact that under Lukashenka's regime, Belarus has no future. Only the new democratic presidential election will resolve the overall crisis in the country, reform the political system and restore citizens' confidence in the government institutions. Taken together, these solutions will create conditions for economic reforms that will give impetus to accelerated development and sustainable long-term economic growth.

The striking movement can play an important role in achieving the goal of holding a new presidential election. The Belarusians who join the strike, including workers of state-owned enterprises, officials and members of law enforcement and the security forces, students and lecturers, school teachers, healthcare and cultural workers, individual entrepreneurs, owners of larger private businesses, and others, are subjected to repressions, which entails significant personal damage to health and material interests. However, after the change of power, the strikers will be able to count on immediate social, economic, and legal support.

To this end, the Cabinet of Representatives of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya proposes the following solutions for the participants of the striking movement and the protest movement, which will be implemented with the advent of democratic changes:

- 1. Release and rehabilitate all political prisoners.** The cases of those who were unlawfully brought to administrative and criminal liability should be reviewed.
- 2. Reinstate dismissed protesters at their place of work** (if they wish so), including into their work experience (seniority) the time when they were illegally fired and continued to remain unemployed, restoration of all allowances and social benefits, including accommodation, as well as compensation for wages for the period of forced absence.

**3. In case of unwillingness or impossibility to return** to the previous place of work, propose to the participants of the strike:

a. **Financing educational programs** for up to 24 months – for example, obtaining additional education, acquiring new specialization and skills, and providing the free of charge opportunity to study foreign languages and individual mentoring for everyone interested.

b. **Encouraging employment in private business** by exempting the employer and the employee from paying contributions to the Social Protection Fund (34% from the employer and 1% from the employee) and income tax (13% from the employee) for six months. In this way, the business will save 34% in case of employment of the striker while the hired employee will earn 14% more in net terms.

c. **Stimulating the private business development by allocating a non-refundable grant for starting an own small business** – in the amount of up to \$10,000 for implementation of a business plan.

**4. Reimburse the financial costs associated with the termination of contracts** for representatives of the law enforcement agencies and civil servants who have resigned or will resign as a result of refusing to obey orders of illegitimate authorities (provided that these persons were not involved in political repression). All military personnel, law enforcement officers and diplomats avenged by the regime for their support to the protest movement will be **restored to their military and diplomatic ranks**. All of them will be able to use the mechanisms described in p. 1-3.

**5. Reinstate students** expelled for politically motivated reasons.

**6. Provide a deferral of payments on mortgage loans** for up to 12 months for those dismissed for political reasons and those who left the service due to their refusal to comply with the orders of the illegitimate authorities. Interest on loans to commercial banks will be paid from a specially created state fund, and the loans themselves will be restructured for a more extended period.

**7. Compensate the participants of the strike for material and non-material damage as a result of repressions** – based on a decision of a specially created commission or court to award compensation. It applies not only to an individual but also to collective repressions (for example, fines imposed on homeowners associations). For all categories of citizens who have partially or entirely lost their physical and psychological health due to political repressions, direct medical assistance (treatment and rehabilitation) in Belarus and/or abroad will be provided.

**8. Support a private business that has suffered losses or closure** due to politically motivated pressure. Several hundred catering, trade, service and industrial establishments have already been closed across the country. Investments of entrepreneurs, tax revenues from their activities and the well-being of employees are under threat. Thousands of them stayed without work. Therefore:

a. All politically motivated orders, instructions, and other officials' decisions concerning such businesses are invalidated (null and void). **All fines paid are subject to refund.** After the restoration of the rule of law in the country, business owners could count on **fair compensation** for losses incurred in connection with the ban on economic activity. The losses will be fully or partially covered in the form of payments from the budget, tax holidays, and financing of credit holidays in commercial banks from a specially created state fund.

b. **A repatriation program** to Belarus of businesses that have opened their activities abroad will be developed and implemented, including concessional lending, facilitated access to real estate, and gratuitous financial assistance to restore economic activity.

In addition, **the system of social and labor relations in new Belarus will be revised** to bring it in line with international standards and criteria for decent work. The discriminatory system of short-term employment contracts, unreasonably harsh disciplinary measures, and other restrictions on labor rights will be canceled. Short-term contracts will be transformed into labor contracts concluded for an indefinite period. Also, in new Belarus, **freedom of association** will be guaranteed, **and the real participation of trade unions in the management of their organization** will be guaranteed, representatives of independent trade unions will be represented on the supervisory boards of their enterprises, and representatives of independent student unions will have a vote in choosing the leadership of their academic establishment and other strategic decisions.

**The above list of measures is not final and will be further updated.**

The primary sources of financing for the support of members of the strike movement and citizens and businesses affected by repressions will be:

1. Budgetary funds saved on the maintenance of the state system and the revision of public expenditures, including a reduction in expenditures on the repressive machine, state ideology and propaganda, and the presidential administration.
2. Dissolution of the Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus and sale of its property, including sanatoriums in Belarus and abroad, hotels, restaurants, lottery business, pharmacies, Duty-Free shops, travel agency, medical center, trading house, agricultural and industrial enterprises, logistics center and many other businesses, palaces and other real estate objects, car park, and other movable property.
3. Property of the illegitimate President and his closest accomplices acquired through illegal means, including financial and real estate assets located abroad.
4. Additional budget revenues and budget cuts connected with the end of gray schemes and minimization of corruption. According to expert estimates, more than \$500 million was spent in 2020 on government procurement alone due to corruption.
5. Anti-crisis fund for Belarus funded by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and foreign countries for the stabilization and reconstruction of the economy during the transitional period and after a free democratic presidential election in the country. A stabilization program

with the IMF, financial support from the World Bank, and macro-financial assistance from the European Union will jointly amount to several billion dollars.

6. Loans and grants from IFIs and foreign countries to support private business. In particular, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank, the International Finance Corporation and the European Commission are ready to contribute hundreds of millions of dollars annually to develop private business.

7. Refinancing public debt at lower interest rates and for longer terms will reduce the debt burden on the budget and release significant funds. External and domestic public debt, including central government guarantees and local government debts, is around \$30 billion. The average interest rate on the public debt is more than 4% per annum. Refinancing a portion of that debt at a lower interest rate would save hundreds of millions of dollars. Lengthening borrowing periods with a deferral of repayment over the first few years will be an additional saving for the public budget in the early years of reform. To that end, a donors' conference will be held during the transition period or immediately after the transition, with the participation of the IMF, the World Bank, the EU, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and many other countries.

8. Increase in tax and other revenues from private business development and overall economic growth.