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УСХОДНЯГА ПАРТНЁРСТВА

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Statement by the Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

On election of deputies of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Belarus of the sixth convocation

Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, drawing on interim and final reports of Belarusian civil society organizations about the progress and results of the electoral process (in particular the materials of monitoring the Human Rights Center "Viasna", Belarusian Helsinki Committee and the Belarusian Association of Journalists) states that despite some minor positive changes in the nature of the election campaign, the past elections can't be recognized as free, open and democratic.

During the elections in 2016 there were some minor positive changes in the nature of the election campaign. It should be noted that:

- collecting signatures for nomination of candidates during campaigning hasn't faced significant obstacles in comparison with previous campaigns from the authorities was not;
- the number of refusals to register initiative groups and number of refusals to register candidates was low;
- the formation of territorial and district election commissions allowed the possibility of the presence of observers;
- the formation of territorial and district election commissions are sometimes tolerated practice of open discussion of candidates for inclusion in the commission, as well as the practice of personal voting in the case of the competition for a place in the committees;
- In a number of cases (27%) procedure to check the district election commissions of signatures for nomination of candidates was transparent for observation;
- the conditions of mass campaign events and posting of campaign materials were better than in previous election campaigns in 2015 and 2012.

With these positive trends, in general, this election campaign was not significantly different from all previous ones.

In the course of this election:

- no equal access of all candidates to the public media;
- discriminatory approach towards the members of political opposition and civil society organizations in the process of formation of election commissions;
- widely used administrative resources in favor of pro-government candidates;
- numerous cases of forcing to participate in early voting;
- votes counting procedure remained non-transparent to observers and in a significant number of cases was conducted with violation of the established order.

The Belarusian authorities did not take into account the majority of the OSCE ODIHR recommendations to improve the electoral process, and those minor changes that were made, did not lead to its greater openness and democracy.

We have to admit that the election of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the sixth convocation in 2016 failed to meet both the requirements of basic international standards and the electoral legislation of the Republic of Belarus and can't be considered democratic, free and open.

We also believe that the election to the House of Representatives of the two independent candidates does not give reason to believe these elections more democratic. We believe that this situation is a result of intentional manipulation of the electoral process by the authorities and significant fraud in the voting process.

Belarusian civil society organizations, participants of the Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum