



Nuclear Transparency Watch

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To: **The Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee**
Attn: Ms Fiona Marshall
Secretary to the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee
e-mail: ECE-Aarhus-Compliance <aarhus.compliance@un.org>

Re.: Draft report of the Compliance Committee
Decision VI/8c on compliance by Belarus with its obligations under the Convention
STATEMENT AS OBSERVER – ACCC session 8 July 2021

Amsterdam, 13 July 2021

Dear Chair, dear members of the ACCC, dear Ms Marshall,

In the name of Nuclear Transparency Watch, Greenpeace Netherlands and the World Information Service on Energy (WISE), we would like to make the following observations concerning the non-compliance of Belarus in relation to art. 3(8) of the Convention.

To our knowledge, the Russian citizen Andrey Ozharovsky has returned to Belarus after 1 May 2020 on one occasion to discuss issues around the Astravetz nuclear power plant with NGOs, without being further harassed. However, he was taking a risk, because as far as we are informed, he never received formal information that the eviction order against him was lifted. Also, in our opinion the ban on entry should have been lifted as soon as the ACCC reached its findings in case ACCC/C/2014/102, and not only on 1 May 2020.

Furthermore, the administrative offences against him, Ms. Novikova, Ms. Sukhiy and Mr. Matskevich have to our knowledge never been formally lifted.

We kindly ask the ACCC to confirm with the involved people whether the Party concerned did or did not cancel the measures against them, and duly and formally informed them of such cancellation, with remedy to any damage that may have occurred to them.

Over the last year – since the run-up to the last presidential elections – there have been a multitude of harassment actions targetted against environmental organisations, including organisations dealing with energy policy and the Astravetz nuclear power plant. This happened especially around crucial decision moments for the Astravetz nuclear power plant (the establishment and reports on implementation of a national action plan in the framework of the European post-Fukushima nuclear stress tests, granting the operation license of the first unit of Astravetz, during the ongoing European stress-test peer review by ENSREG and the European Commission, granting permission for first criticality of the first unit of Astravetz). This included harassment (including incarceration) of NGO persons, of their family members (including at least in

one case a very old mother), investigations of NGO member homes and offices, all against trumped up charges. Several NGO members had to flee the country for their own safety.

Recently, intensified investigations have started against the operation of several environmental NGOs and art-related organisations that also deal with environmental activities, including some that deal with the issue of use of nuclear power. To our knowledge at least some organisations in several major cities in Belarus are *de facto* closed down under the burden of extraordinary financial controls by authorities.

We can, unfortunately, not mention further names here because of the fear of severe repercussions for the people involved.

We ask the ACCC to demand clear safeguards from the Party concerned that also critical citizens, organised in NGOs, can do their work without harassment from state authorities, as required under art. 3(8). Participation in peaceful protest – authorised or not, on whatever subject – can never be accepted as a reason for harassment from the side of authorities. The wide-sweeping and in many cases violent clamp down on dissent we have over the last months seen from the side of the authorities in Belarus – in environmental matters as well as concerning other issues – is completely disproportionate and against internationally accepted standards of basic human rights. In order to take away doubt about whether the Party concerned is willing to come into compliance with art. 3(8) of the Convention, it would be helpful if the Party concerned would enter the European Convention on Human Rights of the Council of Europe.

Sincerely,



Jan Haverkamp

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In the name of:

Nuclear Transparency Watch (NTW) (observer – the communicant “Ecohome” is a member organisation of NTW)

Greenpeace Netherlands (observer – cooperating on energy issues with “Ecohome”)

WISE Nederland (observer – cooperating on energy issues with “Ecohome”)