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## STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE NONGOVERNMENTAL INTERNATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES (ISC/CD) ON THE DETENTION OF BELARUSIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST ALES BIALITSKI 6 SEPTEMBER 2011

*Washington, 6 September 2011* – The nongovernmental International Steering Committee of the Community of Democracies (ISC/CD) joins with numerous other governmental and non-governmental organizations in condemning the unjust arrest and detention of prominent Belarusian human rights activist Ales Bialiatski by the regime of President Alexander Lukashenko. Bialiatski, the President of the Viasna Human Rights Center and Vice President of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), was arrested on August 4 on charges of tax evasion. If convicted, Bialiatski faces up to seven years in jail and property confiscation. According to FIDH, the charges against Bialiatski are an attempt to prevent the Viasna Human Rights Center from continuing to advocate for Belarusians who have been arrested or imprisoned for criticizing the policies of the Lukashenko regime. In addition to providing legal assistance, the Viasna Human Rights Center has also been active in reporting on the ongoing police crackdowns on peaceful demonstrations that have been occurring since the country's December 2010 presidential election. Since April 2011, Bialiatski has been the main target of a smear campaign orchestrated by the Lukashenko regime.

Following similar statements released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Union, the United States, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict Eastern Europe, FIDH, and numerous other governments and non-governmental organizations, the ISC/CD calls on the Lukashenko regime to end the harassment of all democracy and human rights activists as well as echoes the call for the unconditional release of all political prisoners in Belarus, including Bialiatski.

The ISC/CD affirms the need for continued international support for Belarusian activists, especially as the Lukashenko regime works to restrict the activities of non-governmental organizations in the country and eliminate its political opponents.

The ISC/CD, in solidarity with democracy and human rights activists, civil society organizations and democratic governments from around the world, condemns the Lukashenko regime for its repeated refusal to recognize and abide by democratic principles.