

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 17, 2024

The Honorable Linda Thomas-Greenfield
United States Ambassador to the United Nations
United States Mission to the United Nations
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017

Dear Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield,

We write in support of international recognition for the Belarus democracy movement. Since 1946, the United Nations has accepted Non-Member States and allowed their participation in the sessions and workings of the General Assembly. This practice elevates the voices of those who believe in the rules-based international order. On behalf of the more than 1,500 political prisoners jailed in Belarus by an authoritarian regime and to ensure the voices of the people of Belarus are heard by the international community, we respectfully request that the U.S. Mission to the United Nations support an application for the status of Permanent Observer by the Belarus democracy movement.

Since the fraudulent 2020 presidential elections in Belarus, the authoritarian regime led by Alyksandar Lukashenka has sought to limit free speech, arrest dissidents and opposition leaders and develop a closer security, political and economic relationship with Russia. The Government of Belarus facilitated Russia's unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 by allowing the territory of Belarus to be used as a staging ground for Russian security forces and has continued to allow Russia to transfer Ukrainian children illegally separated from their families through Belarusian territory. These views and practices are not consistent with the aspirations of the Belarusian people to live in a peaceful, democratic society.

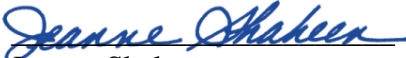
The United States recognizes Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya as the legitimate winner of the 2020 presidential election in Belarus and as the legitimate representative for the Belarusian people. As such, the U.S. Government works with her office and those who resist the Lukashenka regime's authoritarianism to support a sovereign, democratic future for Belarus. These advocates for freedom deserve to be heard and recognized at international institutions, including at the United Nations. In addition, supporting an application for the status of Permanent Observer for the Belarus democracy movement at the UN would send an unequivocal message that the Government of Belarus has failed to live up to its commitments to promote a peaceful, safe, democratic and prosperous environment for the Belarusian people.

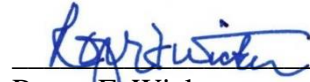
As Congress works to pass the Belarus Democracy, Human Rights and Sovereignty Act of 2023, which reaffirms the United States' commitment to a democratic Belarus, it is clear that more must be done to push back against the Lukashenka regime's crack downs on fundamental freedoms. The Government of Belarus has taken steps to punish independent media outlets and has banned Belarusians living overseas from accessing passports and critical identification documents. The participation of the Belarus democracy movement at the General Assembly would afford the Office of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and the democracy movement with

additional technical resources to support the people of Belarus while rejecting the legitimacy of the Lukashenka regime.

By establishing the Belarus democracy movement as a reliable international actor at the UN, the global community will become better prepared to work together to stand against authoritarian regimes in Belarus and around the world. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,


Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator


Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator