Mr. President,

Right Livelihood and Human Rights Center “Viasna” thank the special rapporteur for her report, in particular the special attention given to the case of Viasna and its members.

We are appalled by the Belarusian authorities’ intensification of systematic attacks towards civil society and anyone expressing dissent, spreading a climate of fear within the entire population. Citizens prosecuted on political grounds continue to be subjected to lengthy pre-trial detention periods and unfair, closed-doors trials.

It will soon be a year since Viasna’s leadership was arrested and later criminally charged for their human rights activities. We deplore the precarious detention conditions and ill-treatment to which them and the other political prisoners, which number has doubled since June last year, are subjected to. In particular, we would like to draw your attention to the conditions of Marfa Rabkova, coordinator of Viasna’s volunteer services currently under trial, whose health drastically deteriorated due to lack of medical attention and denial of treatment since her detention in November 2020.

We continue to relentlessly urge the authorities to abide by their international human rights obligations, including by respecting international standards on detention, and to immediately and unconditionally release Ales Bialiatski, Valiantsin Stefanovic, Uladzimir Labkovic, Marfa Rabkova, Tatsiana Lasitsa, Andrei Chapiuk, Leanid Sudalenka and all other political prisoners.

Madam Special Rapporteur,

Given the silence of the authorities towards the multiple calls and recommendations issued by international actors, what next steps would you recommend the Council to take in order to protect the lives and the work of Belarusian civil society members?

Thank you