

BELARUS

Written statement by the EBRD Governor for Belarus, D.N. Krutoy, Deputy Head, Belarus Presidential Administration

Madam Chair
Governors and delegates
Ladies and gentlemen

For the citizens of all the world's countries, 2020 has been an incredibly testing time. The developing countries, which have limited resources and are struggling with external economic shocks, have been faced with unprecedented challenges. Despite substantial State support for people and businesses, the majority of developing countries are experiencing huge difficulties in building back their economies after the pandemic, against a background of weak economic activity and accumulated socioeconomic problems.

The Covid-19 pandemic can only be defeated by overcoming its effects everywhere.

The international financial institutions are playing a vital role in these circumstances to help developing countries build back their economies. We believe this is in the interests of the entire global community.

Belarus has been no exception, and has experienced all the negative consequences of the spread of Covid-19.

An absolute priority for Belarus has been the protection of its people's lives and health. We have therefore taken measures to provide social protection for the most vulnerable parts of society.

As part of minimising the pandemic's negative impact on the country's socioeconomic development, the Government of Belarus has directed resources towards enhancing the resilience of those in the economy who are most susceptible to the adverse effects of the epidemiological situation, as well as towards ensuring macroeconomic and financial stability, and creating the conditions for restoring economic growth.

The pandemic has not been the only factor to affect the country's socioeconomic development in 2020. The situation in Belarus is also being shaped by the results of the presidential election of 9 August 2020 and the events that have followed. Belarus trusts that all its international partners will be discerning and even-handed, will refrain from coming to hasty judgements and conclusions, and will not exacerbate divisions within Belarusian society or further destabilise the situation. After all, the maintenance of a country's statehood, sovereignty and independence is at stake. Belarus is counting on bona fide support from all its partners at this complex and demanding juncture for our country.

For Belarus, the support of its international partners in these circumstances, particularly the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, is important for minimising the adverse effects of the spread of the coronavirus, and for restoring the economy.

The EBRD has repeatedly demonstrated an ability to work internationally in difficult circumstances and to achieve impressive results.

It is worth noting that, throughout the lifetime of the EBRD's fully-fledged Belarus country strategy for 2016-2019, the Bank invested around €1 billion – more than a third of total investment volumes since 1992.

Results for 2019 show that Annual Bank Investment in Belarus amounted to €390 million, which exceeded the previous record in 2018 of €360 million. Belarus was therefore the country with the ninth-highest level of EBRD annual business.

The EBRD's transition impact in Belarus has been dramatic, combining sizeable investment volumes with vital support in pressing ahead with economic reforms.

The EBRD has traditionally worked successfully with the Belarusian private sector, where a plethora of landmark projects has been completed with partners including Kronospan, Stadler and others. Belarusian companies and their employees much appreciate the level of cooperation achieved.

The wider scope for dialogue included in the current strategy has enabled the Bank to begin financing a raft of crucial national infrastructure projects with high levels of social and environmental impact; they have formed the basis of higher levels of well-being for everyone in Belarus. Most of these projects fall within the remit of green financing.

The projects include water supply and wastewater systems in the country's regions, and provide the general public with environmentally sustainable everyday utilities that enhance the natural environment. The projects also include bridge and road rehabilitation to support the economic potential for regional development, a balanced public transport system, and many others elements.

Crucially, all EBRD projects in Belarus are designed to enhance the well-being of every Belarusian citizen.

The Bank sets itself ambitious targets in seeking to make enduring changes to the regions where it invests. In that regard, it seems critically important to proactively maintain and expand the EBRD's work in Belarus so as to support the solid foundations of the country's sustainable and integrated development.

We hope that the EBRD's new Strategy for Belarus will remain comprehensive in scope and will help Belarus to become more competitive, well-governed, green, inclusive, resilient and integrated, thereby making it possible to ensure a fitting future for the entire nation.

I would like to thank the Governors, the Board of Directors and EBRD staff members for their support and effective partnership.