

Humanitarian Aid and Framework of Action (*Analytical Summary*)

Conscious of the importance of humanitarian aid for the Republic of Belarus, the Head of Directorate of Presidential Affairs Viktor Sheiman (*The Directorate oversees the Department on Humanitarian Activities, is not part of executive branch and is accountable directly to the President*) and Prime Minister Andrei Kobyakov in January 2018 signed a Framework of Action (complete name: *Framework of Action aimed to attract foreign gratuitous assistance to the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2020*).

The Framework of Action is a legally binding document for all stakeholders containing 29 specific measures with the indication of time of implementation, responsible parties, and method of execution. The humanitarian assistance is needed to mitigate both the consequences of Chernobyl catastrophe and new challenges in healthcare, social protection, regional development. Belarus welcomes aid in the form of money, volunteer services, medicines, medical equipment, consumer goods. The aim of receiving the aid is to improve living conditions, provide proper medical treatment, rehabilitation and recuperation for the socially disadvantaged categories of the population, including children from Chernobyl areas, children with physical and mental disabilities, low income families, persons suffering from acute, chronic and terminal diseases.

The adoption of the Framework of Action ushered in a new, a more proactive, supportive and streamlined approach of the Belarusian authorities to receiving and registering humanitarian aid, to engaging with and assisting private and corporate donors, as well as foreign charitable organizations and their representatives in Belarus.

The Framework, in particular, includes specific direct orders for:

- Governors and the Mayor of Minsk – to conclude agreements with foreign and domestic charitable organizations on implementation of humanitarian projects;
- Governors and the Mayor of Minsk – to adopt regional programs for the attraction of humanitarian aid consisting of priority humanitarian projects that must be co-financed by regional and local budgets;
- Governors and the Mayor of Minsk – to come up with lists of humanitarian aid projects, to work with interested parties, to monitor implementation;
- Governors, Mayor of Minsk, National Center for Recuperation – to implement regional programs for improvement of sanatoriums, respite institutions, summer camps that must be co-financed by regional and local budgets;
- Belarusian Telegraph Agency, Department on Humanitarian Activities, Governors, Mayor of Minsk, Government agencies – to raise awareness of foreign sponsors by creating and updating a page on humanitarian cooperation (*page has been created, <http://www.belarus.by/en/press-center/humanitarian-cooperation>*);

- Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Taxes and Duties, Ministry of Economy, Department on Humanitarian Activities – to improve taxation system in order to stimulate humanitarian activities;
- State Customs Committee, Department on Humanitarian Activities – to simplify customs clearance and transit of humanitarian goods and property;
- Department on Humanitarian Activities, Ministry of Communications, Governors, Mayor of Minsk – to create and implement an automated information system “Humanitarian Activities”;
- Department on Humanitarian Activities, Government agencies, Governors, Mayor of Minsk – to regularly review implementation of regional programs and humanitarian projects, to analyze results of humanitarian activities, to submit reports with relevant proposals to the President;
- Ministry of Information, State Television and Radio Company, Department on Humanitarian Activities, Governors, Mayor of Minsk, Government agencies – to raise public awareness domestically on implementation of regional programs and humanitarian projects through TV and radio programs, publications;
- Ministry of Education, higher educational establishments – to introduce in curricula topics on humanitarian activities in Belarus, including on grant applications and requirements of foreign donors; to study feasibility of systemic training and retraining of project managers and fundraisers, and
- Belarusian embassies abroad – to actively engage with foreign donors and charities; to include humanitarian cooperation issues into agenda of discussions with relevant foreign entities; to post appropriate materials on Embassy websites.

The said Framework of Action, readiness of all stakeholders in Belarus to proactively cooperate with foreign donors and charitable organizations, continued improvements and streamlining of procedures to register and distribute humanitarian aid coming from abroad, direct involvement of Belarusian ambassadors and chiefs of mission in the process serve as a guarantee that foreign gratuitous assistance will be well received and documented, will be distributed and provided to those who need it, and will ultimately help the people of Belarus.

The United States has traditionally been one of the largest donors of humanitarian aid for Belarus. The U.S. was the largest humanitarian donor for Belarus in 2017, taking into account U.S. assistance that came to Belarus indirectly from one of CIS countries. Given the potential of the U.S. and the historically active approach of U.S. donors and charities to foreign humanitarian assistance, to missionary activities it would be right to prognosticate that looking ahead the U.S. will be humanitarian donor No 1 for Belarus.

Prepared by the Embassy of Belarus in the U.S.