



# BELARUS

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**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
**71<sup>st</sup> session**  
**First Ministerial Meeting of the Like-Minded Group of Countries**  
**Supporters of Middle-Income Countries**  
**New York, September 23, 2016**

## **Statement**

**by His Excellency Vladimir Makei**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs**  
**of the Republic of Belarus**

Thank you very much, dear Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica for your able stewardship of the meeting.

It gives me pleasure to join you in chairing the meeting to ensure its logical and successful continuation and conclusion.

Thank you very much to all the speakers. We have taken note of all your comments, suggestions and ideas that will guide our common work in the framework of this Like-Minded Group of Countries.

Dear colleagues, let me now briefly walk you through the outcome declaration we are about to adopt. I believe you all have it in your files.

As you can see, this is a concise document which will serve as a guideline for the activities of the Group of our Like-Minded Countries.

It underlines the fact of the very first ministerial meeting of the newly created group and enumerates its participating countries. The next several paragraphs describe the context in which the group was created and in which it will be functioning. The declaration recognizes significant drawbacks as for the current classification of middle-income countries and emphasizes the need for a comprehensive and more adequate classification for this category. The document states that middle-income countries constitute the only significant group of states lacking a UN system-wide development strategy. One of our most important recent achievements was the reflection in the Agenda 2030 of the challenges facing middle income countries. This is also mentioned in the declaration, along with the understanding that the UN should make necessary arrangements to address these challenges.

The declaration describes the major goal of the Group of Like-Minded countries: systematically and comprehensively promote the interests of middle-income countries in the United Nations. In order to support this goal we agree to work towards a comprehensive UN strategy on middle-income countries and renewed criteria beyond the simple notion of "middle-income", to conduct outreach activities and to promote our joint interests within the UN system.

Finally, in the declaration we agree to have regular meetings, including on the high level, to guide the activities of the group and assess the progress. The final provision once again reiterates our determination to advance international middle-income countries agenda.

I assume that members of the Group are all in agreement with this outcome declaration which was thoroughly prepared and agreed upon by our experts. In this case do I take it that we adopt

this declaration as an outcome of the First Ministerial Meeting of the Like-Minded Group of Countries Supporters of Middle-Income Countries?

Thank you very much, it is so decided.

I believe it will be in the interests of the group to adequately publicise the declaration in the United Nations and in our own countries. I assume the experts in New York will make necessary arrangements to ensure that the document is brought to the attention of the UN membership and leadership.

Dear colleagues, before wrapping up the meeting let me very briefly share with you several of my thoughts and observation on the question why we are here today.

To me, the creation of the Group of Like-Minded Countries did not come out of the blue but followed a certain logic within given context and dynamics. Collectively, we made a long journey in raising awareness on the issue of middle-income countries in the UN and in upholding their interests in the course of negotiations on 2030 Agenda. At some point, however, there was a feeling that we reached certain top limit and needed more thinking about how to change the existing system of coordinates.

So, in my understanding, the establishment of the Group of Like-Minded Countries signified a new pattern of work or, as classical German philosophers would have put it, transition from quantity to quality. Indeed, we are creating with our own minds and hands a new reality whereby we, a number of most active countries, take the ownership and responsibility towards the middle-income countries agenda.

And this not just about this particular issue. It is about the very possibility that some members of international community are still able to demonstrate will and courage and to assume responsibility of achieving progress through conscious collective action.

I wholeheartedly congratulate you, dear colleagues, and your countries for having done the first steps on the road of this accomplishment. We are certainly at the beginning of yet another range of our journey. But the crucial thing is done: we created a new process that has its framework and is supported by a strong vision. I am sure you would agree this is not very frequently seen in the United Nations.

As for Belarus, we will continue this voluntary task of working with all of you in order to facilitate broader dialogue on middle-income countries agenda.

We will carry on with this this mission first and foremost as member of Like-Minded Group of Supporters of Middle-Income Countries.

Again, I would like to express my profound gratitude for your presence and active involvement. It is our common effort that has made today's event possible.

Unless there are no other requests for the floor, I would like to close the meeting and wish you all the wonderful rest of Friday and safe journey home.