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für Osteuropakunde e.V.

Belarus at the Crossroads: The Presidential Elections and Beyond

On 19 December 2010, Belarusians will go to the polls in a presidential election. On the surface, little seems to indicate that this year will differ from 2001 and 2006 when Alexander Lukashenko engineered “elegant victories”, through massive manipulations of the electoral process, intimidation and even disappearances of political opponents, and brutal crackdowns on civil society protesting against electoral fraud. Underneath, however, developments have been underway that may well herald change. The keystone to Lukashenko’s rule, political support and massive subsidization by Russia, is quickly eroding as Moscow has become increasingly frustrated by its partner in Minsk. Considerable parts of society, especially younger, urban and educated Belarusians, have doubts in a future under its current leader, and even segments of the nomenklatura are beginning to see that change is necessary. The opposition, although less united than previously, seems highly energized and several of its leaders have entered the presidential campaign. Civil society more broadly is getting ready to critically watch the electoral process and prepares to contest its results, should they be falsified again.

In this situation, intriguing questions arise. Will the upcoming elections be “business as usual” for Lukashenko or indeed present a turning point for Belarus? Will the opposition manage to present a convincing alternative to the status quo? Which programmes for the development of Belarus are on offer by individual candidates? Are Belarusians ready for change and willing to demand it forcefully? How far is Russia willing to go in putting pressure on Lukashenko? And is the EU prepared to engage actively if political change in Belarus becomes real?

To discuss these questions, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde e.V. invites you to a panel discussion on

Tuesday, 26 October 2010, 19.00,
at the **Centre Monbijou, Oranienburger Strasse 13/14, 10178 Berlin.**

Panelists will include:

Andrei Sannikov, Presidential Candidate, former Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus, and leader of the “European Belarus” movement

Uta Zapf, Member of the German Bundestag, Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Stefanie Schiffer, Executive Director, European Exchange, and Member of the Board, Human Rights in Belarus

Joerg Forbrig, Senior Programme Officer, Central and Eastern Europe, German Marshall Fund of the United States

Moderator: **Gabriele Freitag**, Executive Director, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde e.V.

The discussion will be held in English. This event is supported by the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

Dr. Gabriele Freitag
Executive Director
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde e.V.

To attend this event, please RSVP by 25 October 2010

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26 October 2010, 19.00
Centre Monbijou
Oranienburger Straße 13/14
10178 Berlin

First Name: _____

Surname: _____

Institution: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

I will participate

I will not participate