



# THE NATIONAL REVIEW BY THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS OF THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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## **THE KEY MESSAGE (SUMMARY) OF THE SECOND VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW BY THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS OF THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Since the end of 2020, Belarus has been implementing the 2030 Agenda in the face of unprecedented illegal unilateral economic sanctions (UCMs), which are actively applied by Western countries. These actions not only hinder the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by Belarus but also run counter to the UN Charter and the core UN conventions in the field of human rights. The unilateral economic sanctions maintained against Belarus offset the results achieved in the implementation of the SDGs.

Today, the level of progress towards the implementation of the SDGs achieved by Belarus remains rather high and is almost 80%.

In 2019, Belarus ranked 53rd in the Human Development Index and is in the category of countries with a very high level of human development. Belarus ranks 34th (out of 163 states) in the SDG rating.

The SDGs are implemented in the National Strategy for Sustainable Development until 2035 and are also correlated with state programmes of socio-economic development.

Belarus has succeeded in monitoring and evaluating the progress in the achievement of the SDGs. A National SDG Reporting Platform has been created; access to 229 out of 267 international indicators has been provided; 166 indicators correspond to the global level.

A unified regional list of SDG achievement indicators has been compiled. It includes 145 indicators out of which 85 correspond to the indicators of the national list, and 26 reflect the specifics of regional development.

**SDG 4.** The country has enacted a new edition of the Code of the Republic of Belarus on Education, the Concept of the Development of the Education System of the Republic of Belarus until 2030, and the State Programme "Education and Youth Policy" for 2021-2025.

The adult literacy rate is 99.87%. The coverage of preschool children with preparation for school is 100%. The coverage of the employed population with basic, general secondary, and vocational education is 99%.

Belarus ranked 17th out of 163 countries according to the indicator "access to basic knowledge" in the Social Progress Index for 2021.

Belarus has ensured gender parity in education. The country is implementing the concept of continuing education. Access to education is provided to students with special developmental needs, and the country has a developed system of inclusive education.

**SDG 5.** The implementation of gender policy in Belarus is based on respect for national interests with account of generally recognized principles of international law and human rights, support for traditional values and cultural foundations of the Belarusian society.

Belarus is among the 22 countries where the human development index' of women is equal to or exceeds the same indicator for men. In terms of the gender inequality index, Belarus ranks 31st out of 162 countries; according to the Global Report of the World Economic Forum 2021, Belarus ranks 33rd out of 156 countries in terms of the gender gap index.

The share of women in leadership positions is about 50%; support is provided to women entrepreneurs.

The country is implementing the sixth National Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2021-2025.

Belarus is introducing the National Model of Reproductive Health and Family Planning, which provides for the organisation of men's health services. Belarus is among the top 25 countries in the rating of comfortable conditions for motherhood.

**SDG 14.** Belarus is located on the watershed of rivers belonging to the basins of two seas - the Baltic and the Black. While being a landlocked country, Belarus contributes to preserving marine ecosystems through the protection of transboundary rivers, thus protecting the waters of the Baltic and the Black Seas.

Belarus has developed the principle of basin management of water resources, which implies the management of river basins and improvement of the ecological status of surface water bodies. As a result of this work, in 2025 the ecological status "good and above" should be assigned to 75% of water resources.

**SDG 15.** Belarus is among the top ten most forested countries in Europe.

The country is implementing the National Action Plan for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity for 2021-2025.

The concept of the draft Law of the Republic of Belarus "On the Management of Genetic Resources" has been prepared; its adoption is planned for 2022.

The country has a regulatory system of specially protected natural territories, including those of a transboundary nature. In the context of the construction of protective barriers on the Belarusian-Polish border by Poland, part of which will affect the territory of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Belovezhskaya Pushcha", the issue arises of the preservation of this relict forest, its biological diversity, and the existing ecosystem.

Special attention is paid to the protection and use of peatlands, and the achievement of a neutral balance of land degradation. The area of lands subject to various types of soil degradation, including agricultural lands exposed to radioactive contamination as a result of the Chernobyl accident, is decreasing annually.

**SDG 17.** To establish a sustainable partnership, Belarus has created an architecture for achieving the SDGs, which includes representatives of government agencies, the parliament, the business community, and the civil society; interaction with UN agencies and other international and regional partners is maintained.

The principle of public-private partnership is enshrined in the new edition

of the Constitution of Belarus; significant work has been performed to stimulate and encourage partnership between the public and the private sectors.

In its interaction with other states in the international arena, Belarus is guided by the principle of partnership relations. Belarus supports the establishment of global thematic partnerships in international organisations and actively participates in this process. The efforts of Belarus led to the launch of a global UN partnership to combat human trafficking.

## INTRODUCTION.

The second Voluntary National Review by the Republic of Belarus of the Progress Achieved towards the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reflects the country's progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in recent years. In 2017, Belarus was among the first countries to submit the first Voluntary National Review.

The Republic of Belarus is a socially-oriented state, whose policy is focused on ensuring human well-being and decent living conditions. The provisions of the 2030 Agenda are fully correlated with the main tasks related to the functioning of the state, therefore the Republic of Belarus remains committed to fulfilling its international obligations.

Today, according to international experts, the level of progress towards the implementation of the SDGs achieved by Belarus remains rather high and is almost 80%.

In 2019, Belarus ranked 53rd in the Human Development Index (HDI) and is in the category of countries with a very high level of human development. Belarus ranks 34th (out of 163 states) in the SDG rating.

Most of the Sustainable Development Goals and objectives are integrated into the main strategic and programme documents adopted in Belarus. The Sustainable Development Goals are a cross-cutting element of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus until 2035, which was approved in 2021. The key objectives are focused on achieving high living standards, quality economic growth on a new digital technological base, forming a fully-fledged competitive environment, creating comfortable conditions for life and personal potential development, and preserving natural systems for present and future generations.

The National Strategy has been agreed with the National Coordinator for the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as members of the Sustainable Development Council, which includes 38 public bodies and organisations, a parliamentary group, and civil society. One of the new elements of the national architecture is the institution of SDG Youth Ambassadors selected from among students of various universities in Belarus. A new pool of Youth Ambassadors for 2022-2023 was elected in February 2022.

The priorities of the long-term development of the Republic of Belarus are defined as follows:

- sustainable development of the family institution and qualitative growth of human potential;
- productive employment and decent incomes of the population;
- digital transformation of the economy and widespread dissemination of innovations;
- creation of a developed business environment and sustainable infrastructure;

ensuring environmental safety, and transitioning to rational models of production and consumption (circular economy).

In 2021, the Programme of Socio-economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025 was approved, which is closely linked to the provisions of the National Strategy and covers the first stage of goal-setting. The tool for achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the five-year Programme is state programmes, therefore, the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals is closely linked to the implementation of 25 major state programmes, including in the areas of demographic security, social security, education, sustainable use of natural resources, energy-saving, and innovative development.

Implementation of state programmes and therefore achievement of Sustainable Development Goals are financed from the republican budget. About 70% of budget allocations are directed towards the implementation of the provisions of the 2030 Agenda.

The implementation of the SDGs is also ensured through the expanded application of results-based budgeting in various sectors of the economy and areas. In the financial sector, the State Programme "Public Finance Management and Financial Market Development" is being implemented until 2025.

All the Sustainable Development Goals are interconnected. Measures taken to achieve one SDG predictably affect the status and progress on other SDGs.

Assessment of the current status and progress on the SDGs in the country is performed through the National SDG Reporting Platform created in 2018. It is a single hub for collecting, summarizing, and distributing up-to-date information about the current situation concerning the implementation of the SDGs in the country and is available to national and international users. Today, access to 229 out of 267 indicators is provided; 166 indicators correspond to the global level. A unified regional list of SDG achievement indicators has been developed. It includes 145 indicators out of which 85 correspond to the indicators of the national list, and 26 reflect the specifics of regional development. The COVID-19 pandemic had no impact on the data collection process.

Key conclusions on the Sustainable Development Goals.

**SDG 1.** Extreme poverty has been eliminated in Belarus; the indicator of material poverty in Belarus decreased by 0.7 percentage points in 2021 compared to 2020 and amounted to 4.1 per cent.

Since the beginning of 2022, the minimum monthly wage has been increased; stable operation of the social service system covering elderly, disabled, and incapacitated citizens has been ensured.

In 2021, the level of material poverty of large families decreased by 4.1 percentage points compared to 2020.

**SDG 2.** In the 2021 global food security rating, Belarus ranked 36th out of 113 countries and was characterized as a state with favourable conditions for food supply.

Against the background of external and internal challenges, as well as the sanctions maintained by Western countries, Belarus demonstrates every capability to fully guarantee its food security.

**SDG 3.** Belarus is one of the world leaders in terms of access of the population to medical services.

Maternal mortality has decreased 21 times; the mortality of children under the age of 5 and in the neonatal period has significantly decreased (1 per 1000 live births). According to this indicator, the Republic of Belarus is at the level of developed countries.

Within the framework of the National Calendar of Preventive Vaccinations, almost 100% of the country's population have been vaccinated (the coverage of children with preventive vaccinations against all infections included in the immunisation programme is 98-99 per cent, while the coverage of adult population is more than 97 per cent).

In 2021, the incidence of HIV infection in the Republic of Belarus was 16 cases per 100,000 population.

Belarus has launched the preventive project "Healthy Cities and Towns", which aims to minimise the risks associated with consumption of tobacco and alcohol, irrational and unbalanced nutrition, and physical inactivity.

In the Republic of Belarus, all adults and children with ophthalmological diseases (cataract, glaucoma, diseases of the retina and vitreous, optic nerve, cornea, pathologies of the lacrimal tract and orbit, refractive disorders, etc.) and ocular lesions receive modern specialised ophthalmological care.

**SDG 4.** The concept of continuing education is being implemented in Belarus. Students with special developmental needs have access to education, and the country has a developed system of inclusive education.

Belarus ranked 17th out of 163 countries in terms of the indicator "access to basic knowledge" in the Social Progress Index for 2021.

The country has enacted a new edition of the Code of the Republic of Belarus on Education, the Concept of Development of the Education System of the Republic of Belarus until 2030, and the State Programme "Education and Youth Policy" for 2021-2025.

The adult literacy rate is 99.87%. The coverage of preschool children with preparation for school is 100%. The coverage of the employed population with basic, general secondary, and vocational education is 99%.

**SDG 5.** The implementation of gender policy in Belarus is based on respect for national interests with account of generally recognized principles of international law and human rights, support for traditional values and cultural foundations of the Belarusian society.

Belarus is among the 22 countries where the human development index of women is equal to or exceeds the same indicator for men. In terms of the gender inequality index, Belarus ranks 31st out of 162 countries; according to the Global



Report of the World Economic Forum 2021, Belarus ranks 33rd out of 156 countries in terms of the gender gap index.

The country is implementing the sixth National Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2021-2025.

Belarus has developed and is introducing the National Model of Reproductive Health and Family Planning, which provides for the organisation of men's health services. Belarus is among the top 25 countries in the rating of comfortable conditions for motherhood.

The proportion of women in leadership positions is about 50%. Economic empowerment of women is ensured through assistance in business development, including in rural areas, inter alia through non-refundable grants provided by the state.

**SDG 6.** Belarus is implementing the State Programme "Comfortable Housing and Favourable Environment" for 2021-2025 which inter alia includes the subprogramme "Pure Water" focused on supplying consumers with drinking-quality water (currently the coverage is 95.9 per cent).

Almost the entire population of the country is provided with basic sanitary and hygienic conditions; during the last 10 years, the share of household and industrial wastewater undergoing safe treatment has been more than 99%.

**SDG 7.** 100 per cent of the country's population has access to electricity, its consumption is fully supplied by the country's power plants.

In June 2021, the first power unit of the Belarusian NPP was commissioned, and it is now operating at the rated capacity. Notably, more than 8.6 billion kWh were generated, which has allowed to substitute more than 2 billion cubic metres of natural gas.

After the commissioning of the Belarusian NPP, its average annual base load output will be 17-18 billion kWh, which will allow to substitute up to 4.5 billion cubic metres of natural gas per year.

Belarus strives to maximize the use of renewable energy sources, which corresponds to one of the key objectives set out by the UN in its 2030 Agenda.

**SDG 8.** The GDP per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP) has grown by 11 per cent over the past five years and reached more than \$20,000 in 2020.

In 2020, compared to 2019, nominal wages increased by 14.8 per cent, and real wages increased by 8.8 per cent.

In 2020, the unemployment rate in the country was 4 per cent; as a result of measures taken by the Government of Belarus the rate of unemployment among young people was reduced.

This is one of the lowest indicators not only in the CIS region but also in Europe.

Belarus maintains a fairly high level of employment. In 2020, it was 67.5 per cent of the workforce, which is almost the same as the level observed in EU

countries during this period (67.8 per cent).

The state provides additional employment guarantees regardless of age; the necessary conditions have been created for the realisation of the right of persons with disabilities to work.

In 2021, 61.3 per cent of unemployed persons were given jobs with additional employment guarantees.

The coronavirus pandemic has negatively affected the labour market, however, in Belarus, which has not taken the path of total isolation, the situation in the labour market remains quite manageable - the employment rate of the working-age population remains at a high level - 83.3 per cent of the working-age population, 67.3 per cent of persons aged 15-74 years, 65.7 per cent of persons aged 16-30 years.

There is a wage gap between women and men due to the greater employment of women in the social sphere, where wages are lower than in other areas. At the same time, women and men are equally paid for performing the same functional duties in the same positions. The list of professions associated with hard working conditions in which women are not allowed to work has been reduced.

**SDG 9.** In 2021, the value-added share of the manufacturing industry in the country's GDP increased by 2.2 percentage points compared to 2015 and amounted to 22.9 per cent.

In the world ranking according to the industrial competitiveness index, Belarus ranks 46th (out of 152 countries).

There is a positive trend towards improvement of the country's ranking according to the Global Innovation Index: by the end of 2021, Belarus ranked 62nd position (out of 132 countries), improving the indicator by 2 points.

To facilitate innovations, as well as the development of infrastructure and roads, state programmes have been developed in the relevant areas.

Belarus is successfully implementing the policy aimed at building an IT country and ensuring the transition to a digital economy; priority is given to the development of the IT sector, which is currently the most dynamically developing industry in Belarus. In 2005, the Hi-Tech Park — the Belarusian "Silicon Valley" — was created.

Currently, in Belarus, almost a quarter of the total number of university students receive education in STEM specialties, including in about 70 IT specialisations.

Belarus is among the world leaders in the export of IT services per capita.

**SDG 10.** For more than 10 years, Belarus has maintained a low income gap.

Special attention is paid to the problems of persons with disabilities, a National Plan has been developed based on the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with the aim of improving their quality of

life: a unified system has been built to provide citizens with technical means of social rehabilitation that increase the ability to lead an independent and mobile lifestyle.

One of the main directions of the state's social policy is the creation of a barrier-free environment: almost 70% of social facilities are equipped with barrier-free elements, and 17% of facilities have become fully accessible.

In 2021, labour, employment, and social protection authorities provided all citizens in need with the full spectrum of technical means of social rehabilitation.

### **SDG 11.**

Belarus has adopted the concept of sustainable cities and settlements, the main objectives of which are to create a comfortable, energy-efficient, and safe urban environment, and to ensure environmentally sustainable urbanisation.

To reduce interregional disparities in the level and quality of life of the population, the project "Smart Cities of Belarus" has been launched and is being implemented under the State Programme "Digital Development of Belarus" for 2021-2025 and, taking into account its scale and significance, it has been included in the list of comprehensive "projects of the future" of the Republic of Belarus.

The future-oriented project "Smart Cities of Belarus" is part of the process of overall digital transformation of Belarus aimed at achieving the status of an IT-oriented state.

Targeted efforts are being made to construct, reconstruct, and modernize gas purification plants. Measures are being taken to reduce emissions of pollutants from transport that exceed emissions from stationary sources.

### **SDG 12.**

Since 2017, Belarus has been implementing the National Strategy for Management of Solid Municipal Waste (SMW) and Secondary Material Resources (SMRs) in the Republic of Belarus until 2035.

About 3.9 million tons of solid municipal waste are generated annually in Belarus, which is about 6 per cent of the total amount of waste generated. The level of extraction of the main types of secondary material resources from the composition of solid municipal waste is planned to reach 64 per cent by 2025, 79 per cent by 2030, and 90 per cent by 2035.

The indicator of the recycling of SMW is planned to be achieved through the extraction of all usable SMRs (up to 29% of the total volume of generated SMW) and through the introduction of new technologies such as composting of the organic part, as well as through the widespread introduction of technologies for the use of municipal waste for power generation in the Republic of Belarus (61 % of the total volume of generated SMW).

A system of separate collection and sorting of municipal solid waste is being gradually introduced in the republic, which should ultimately ensure the achievement of "zero" disposal of MSW.

**SDG 13.** The total amount of greenhouse gas emissions in Belarus in 2019 decreased by more than 35 per cent compared to 1990. Meanwhile, over the past ten years, the volume of greenhouse gas emissions in the country has been rather static and ranges from 86 to 92 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent.

In the context of the international obligations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, in 2021, the Belarusian side approved a new nationally determined contribution, according to which it is planned to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 35 per cent by 2030 compared to the 1990 level, including the land use, land-use change, and forestry sector, while using no additional funding.

The process of power generation from renewable sources is being developed in Belarus. There has been a considerable increase in the use of such renewable energy sources as wind, hydro and solar energy (a 15-fold increase in power generation compared to the level of 2010), and biogas (a 5-fold increase in consumption compared to the level of 2010).

In the period 2016-2021, 25 photovoltaic plants with a total installed electric capacity of more than 200 MW; 5 hydroelectric power plants with a capacity of more than 60 MW; 36 wind power plants with a capacity of about 60 MW; and 11 biogas complexes with a capacity of more than 12 MW were built in Belarus.

Belarus is among the world leaders in the restoration of wetlands, which contributes to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions; with the commissioning of the two units of the Belarusian NPP, greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced by more than 7 million tons.

The Republic of Belarus plays a significant role in providing the most critical ecosystem services to the entire European region, which is related to preserving a significant part of the country's territory in its natural state.

**SDG 14.** Belarus is located on the watershed of rivers belonging to the basins of two seas - the Baltic and the Black. While being a landlocked country, Belarus contributes to preserving marine ecosystems through the protection of transboundary rivers, thus protecting the waters of the Baltic and the Black Seas.

Belarus has developed the principle of basin management of water resources, which implies the management of river basins and improvement of the ecological status of surface water bodies. As a result of this work, by 2025 the ecological status "good and above" should be assigned to 75% of water resources.

**SDG 15.** Belarus is among the top ten most forested countries in Europe.

The country is implementing the National Action Plan for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity for 2021-2025.

The concept of the draft Law of the Republic of Belarus "On the Management of Genetic Resources" has been prepared; its adoption is planned for 2022.

The country has a regulatory system of specially protected natural

territories, including those of a transboundary nature. In the context of the construction of protective barriers on the Belarusian-Polish border by Poland, part of which will affect the territory of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Belovezhskaya Pushcha", the issue arises of the preservation of this relict forest, its biological diversity, and the existing ecosystem.

Special attention is paid to the protection and use of peatlands, and the achievement of a neutral balance of land degradation.

The area of lands subject to various types of soil degradation, including agricultural lands exposed to radioactive contamination as a result of the Chernobyl accident, is decreasing annually.

**SDG 16.** Close attention is paid to the problem of domestic violence in Belarus. Since 2014, the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On the Basics of Crime Prevention Activities" has been in force; in 2022, the legislation regulating the prevention of domestic violence was improved.

The main provisions of the Programme to Combat Crime and Corruption for 2020-2022 are aimed at strengthening the protection of minor victims „of human trafficking.

Belarus makes a significant contribution to international cooperation in combating human trafficking.

At the initiative of Belarus, the UN Global Plan to Combat Human Trafficking was adopted in 2010 and a Trust Fund for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking, Especially Women and Children, was established.

Since 2006, Belarus on a biennial basis has sponsored the adoption by the UN General Assembly of a resolution on combating human trafficking. At the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, another resolution entitled "Improving Coordination of Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking" was adopted by consensus.

In 2021, at the proposal of Belarus, the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its 30th session adopted by consensus the resolution "Implementation of the UN Global Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking".

As a follow-up to the adopted resolutions, a regular review of the UN Global Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking was conducted in 2021, following which the 2021 Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking was agreed upon.

**SDG 17.** To establish a sustainable partnership, Belarus has created an architecture for achieving the SDGs, which includes representatives of government agencies, the parliament, the business community, and the civil society; interaction with UN agencies and other international and regional partners is maintained.

The principle of public-private partnership is enshrined in the new edition

of the Constitution of Belarus; significant work has been performed to stimulate and encourage partnership between the public and the private sectors.

In its interaction with other states in the international arena, Belarus is guided by the principle of partnership relations. Belarus supports the establishment of global thematic partnerships in international organisations and actively participates in this process. For example, Belarus has made a significant contribution to the launch of a global partnership to combat human trafficking, which includes states, international organisations, civil society, and the private sector.

## **Sustainable Development Goals Achievements**

### **SDG 1 “No Poverty”.**

Traditionally, the problem of poverty and injustice has received due attention in Belarus, which is why the Republic of Belarus accomplished the Millennium Development Goal "Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger" ahead of schedule.

Consistent state policy to increase the level of incomes of the population and provide social guarantees to the most vulnerable citizens has allowed to reduce the number of low-income citizens: in 2021, the indicator decreased by 0.7 percentage points compared to 2020 and amounted to 4.1 per cent (*in Belarus it is twice lower than the average for the CIS and Eastern Europe*).

In 2021, the legislation of Belarus established a new procedure for the determination of the minimum wage according to which it should be maintained at a level not lower than 30 per cent of the projected value of the nominal average monthly wage in Belarus. At the same time, the government sets the minimum wage in coordination with republican employers' associations and trade unions at the proposal of the National Council for Labour and Social Affairs. On January 1, 2022, the minimum monthly wage was increased by 14.3 per cent compared to January 2021.

The real growth of all types of incomes of the population has been ensured, including:

- wages of employees (104.4 per cent), including in the public sector (103.7 per cent);

- average retirement pension (101.1 per cent);

- payments calculated based on the average per capita minimum subsistence budget (101 per cent);

- benefits for families raising children under the age of 3 (106 per cent).

The Republic of Belarus has ensured the stable operation of the social service system, which includes 92 residential institutions and 146 territorial social service centres providing citizens in difficult situations with social services in the forms of inpatient, partial inpatient, outpatient, urgent, and home-based social services (more than 128,000 incapacitated citizens receive assistance).

Since the beginning of 2021, the territorial centres have been providing such new services as daycare, training in caring skills for family members providing care to disabled relatives, and club activities (according to interests) in the form of home-based social services.

In Belarus, there are substitute families in which adult incapacitated citizens receive social services in conditions of cohabitation and running of common households with individuals who provide them with social services and are not legally obliged to support them.

In residential homes for the elderly and disabled, social services are provided to 18,700 incapacitated citizens. In 2021, the services of assisted living

in residential institutions were provided to 1,600 disabled people.

In 2021, the level of provision of disabled and elderly citizens with social services amounted to 910 per decimille.

The system of state targeted social assistance, which is dynamically developing and improving, is aimed at supporting low-income citizens and citizens in difficult situations. The criterion for classifying families and citizens as low-income is the average per capita minimum subsistence budget.

In 2021, 282,400 people became recipients of social assistance in the amount of about 123 million rubles.

Additional measures have been taken to increase the level of social support for large families (the main recipients of monthly social benefits): the criterion used to determine the need for monthly social benefits has been raised from 100 per cent to 115 per cent of the minimum subsistence budget and the period of payment has been changed from 6 months to 12 months.

As a result, in 2021, the level of material poverty of large families decreased by 4.1 percentage points compared to 2020 and amounted to 20.5 per cent.

Belarus has a civil protection system operating in accordance with the National Strategy to Reduce the Risk of Emergencies until 2030; territorial programmes for its implementation have been developed; measures are being taken to ensure life safety and create comfortable living conditions for the population, reduce the risk of disasters and deaths resulting from them, minimize possible damage from natural and man-made emergencies.

Scheduled activities to ensure the life safety of the most vulnerable groups of the population involve maintaining the records of lonely, lonely and elderly, and disabled citizens, large families, and families with children at social risk, conducting awareness-raising work with them, and providing targeted social assistance to citizens in order to ensure safe living conditions (*repair of furnaces and electrical wiring, installation of autonomous fire detectors; elimination of violations of fire safety rules*).

The implementation of the Strategy directly or indirectly affects the progress towards the achievement of all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, it is based on the vision of the Republic of Belarus to reduce the risk of emergencies in the long term with account of national interests.

Besides, the Ministry of Emergency Situations has developed a mobile application called "The Ministry of Emergency Situations of Belarus. Help Is at Hand", which includes an interactive map of weather changes, the option of prompt notification about adverse and dangerous phenomena, as well as audio information with recommendations on first aid and other support in case of unforeseen situations.



## **SDG 2 “Zero Hunger”.**

In the context of the increasing influence of external challenges, ensuring food security and independence remains one of the priorities of the state socio-economic policy of the Republic of Belarus, which is associated with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal in the field of food security at the national level.

In the period 2020-2021, characterized by external and internal challenges, the food system of Belarus demonstrated a high level of efficiency and the capability to ensure national food security. Today Belarus is self-sufficient in terms of food supply and export-oriented, which excludes the possibility of hunger and ensures the country's food security.

The country has approved the Doctrine of National Food Security of the Republic of Belarus until 2030 as a system of official public policy provisions; a food security monitoring system has been established in accordance with international recommendations.

In the 2021 global food security rating, Belarus ranked 36th out of 113 countries and was characterized as a state with favourable conditions for food supply.

As for accessibility of food for the population, the share of domestically produced products is 77 per cent, which fully ensures the country's food security. The domestic market is characterized by a high level of self-sufficiency. At the same time, due to the prevailing climatic conditions, some types of vegetables and fruits, fish, and crustaceans dominate in the import structure.

Rational consumption rates have been achieved for almost all key staple foods.

The country is actively working to maintain the quality and safety of products, including through the improvement of the system of technological regulations and production standards, as well as in accordance with international requirements. The development of new competitive food products, especially preventive and functional nutrition, is in demand.

The development of the agro-industrial complex is ensured in accordance with the State Programme "Agricultural Business" for 2021-2025, which defines economically feasible volumes of agricultural production for meeting the needs of the domestic market and ensuring effective exports, as well as measures to stabilize the financial situation in the industry.

Within the agro-industrial complex, farms are the most popular organisational and legal form of business in the agricultural sector of the republic (about 3,462 farms are registered).

The food sector is developing dynamically in Belarus. The volumes of production in the agricultural sector allow to increase the export potential of the country.

Belarus is one of the world's largest exporters of dairy products, flax fibre,

rapeseed oil, sausage products, sugar, and poultry meat.

The share of agricultural products and food products in the total volume of goods exported by the Republic of Belarus is 16.8 per cent.

Belarus exports food products and agricultural raw materials to 109 countries of the world.

### **SDG 3 “Good Health and Well-Being”.**

Belarus is making significant efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal in the field of healthcare.

The concept of safe motherhood formulated by the World Health Organisation has been included in the safe motherhood programme in Belarus.

In the Republic of Belarus, there is a multi-tiered system providing medical care to women and children which as of 2021 included a perinatal centre of the 4th technological level (the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre "Mother and Child"), 17 perinatal centres of the 3rd level in the regions and the city of Minsk; 27 inter-district and urban perinatal centres of the 2nd level, and 64 healthcare organisations of the 1st district level.

Pregnant women are guaranteed medical care in public health organisations during and after childbirth. 100% of women have access to prenatal and postnatal medical care, and 99.9% of births are attended by qualified medical personnel.

Thanks to the favourable conditions for the birth of healthy children, reduction of child disability, and reduction of infant, child, and maternal mortality in the period 2000-2019, the maternal mortality rate in Belarus decreased by 21 times: from 21 to 1 per 100,000 live births. In 2019, the infant mortality rate reached the level of 1 per 1,000 live births, taking into account children with a birth weight of 500 grams or more. According to this indicator, the Republic of Belarus is at the level of developed countries.

There is a decrease in the mortality rate of children under the age of 5, which by 2019 decreased to 3 per 1,000 live births compared to 12.3 in 2000.

The Republic of Belarus is making every effort to provide high-quality medical care to people living with HIV and high coverage of key and vulnerable groups of the population with HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support services. Belarus has consistently pursued an active policy to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS and to implement the commitments undertaken under the 2016 UN General Assembly Political Declaration on the Global Response to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic and its Cessation by 2030.

Thanks to the implementation of the State Programme "Health of the People and Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus" for 2016-2020 and HIV prevention programmes in partnership with international organisations (UNAIDS, UNDP, UNICEF) and non-governmental associations with the support of the Global Fund, the country has managed to significantly limit the spread of HIV infection.

In 2021, the incidence of HIV infection in the Republic of Belarus was 16 cases per 100,000 population and presently it remains in a concentrated phase: HIV infection is prevalent in the groups that are most vulnerable to HIV, such as injecting drug users (22.7%), women involved in sex work (9.7%), and men practising sex with men (5.8 %).

Despite the epidemiological situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country has ensured progress towards all the targets of the UNAIDS 95-95-95 strategic goal: by the end of 2021, 85.3 per cent of the estimated number of people living with HIV in Belarus had been identified and were aware of their diagnosis; 85 per cent of them were receiving antiretroviral treatment; 82.1 per cent had achieved undetectable viral load.

The Republic of Belarus supports and develops the Global Health Sector Strategy on Viral Hepatitis for 2016-2021 adopted in May 2016 by the World Health Assembly, which in the period 2017-2021 resulted in a more than twofold reduction in the incidence of viral hepatitis B in the country: from 11.2 to 4.8 per 100,000 population.

In order to stop the spread of tuberculosis in the territory of the Republic of Belarus, in 2016-2017, the country implemented the grant of the Global Fund "Ensuring universal access to rapid laboratory diagnostics of drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) and universal coverage of patients with DR-TB with quality treatment".

Since 2019, the Republic of Belarus has been implementing the next grant of the Global Fund "Strengthening of HIV and TB national systems of prevention, treatment, care and support in the Republic of Belarus". Measures to prevent the spread of tuberculosis envisioned in the State Programme "People's Health and Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus" implemented in 2016-2020 and a similar state programme adopted for 2021-2025 allowed to achieve a more than twofold reduction in the incidence of tuberculosis in the country in the period 2016-2021: from 28.3 to 21.7 per 100,000 people.

The healthcare system has ensured universal coverage of health services, access to safe, effective and high-quality medicines and vaccines.

In the Republic of Belarus, all adults and children with ophthalmological diseases (cataract, glaucoma, diseases of the retina and vitreous, optic nerve, cornea, pathologies of the lacrimal tract and orbit, refractive disorders, etc.) and ocular lesions receive modern specialised ophthalmological care.

Several unique microsurgical and laser operations on the eye are performed in the Republic of Belarus, including corneal transplantation using a femtosecond laser; surgical treatment of glaucoma involving stenting of the canal of Schlemm; combined surgical interventions (corneal transplantation, cataract phacoemulsification, vitreal surgery; glaucoma surgery, including with implantation of drainage devices).

Measures have been taken to strengthen the material and technical base of sanatorium-and-spa and health-improving organisations, which has allowed to increase the number of consumers of services, including rehabilitation from disorders caused by the coronavirus infection. In 2021, 749,600 Belarusian citizens were accommodated in sanatorium-and-spa and health-improving organisations, as well as in other specialised institutions (the growth rate is 135.2

per cent compared to 2020).

Improvement and implementation of the National Calendar of Preventive Vaccinations in the last 10 years have resulted in achievement and maintenance at a high level (97 per cent and above) of the coverage of preventive vaccination and specific protection of the population of the Republic of Belarus from viral hepatitis B, tuberculosis, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, measles, mumps, and rubella.

Targeted efforts to implement evidence-based measures for reclamation and cultivation of wetlands, landscaping in settlements and countryside recreation places, sanitary anti-epidemic measures, including the improvement of sanitary and epidemiological legislation, continuous surveillance, active identification and treatment of patients with malaria, entomological monitoring of specific vectors of invasion, and disinsection allowed to prevent local cases of malaria in the territory of the Republic of Belarus.

Since 2000, isolated cases of malaria have been registered in the territory of Belarus, all of which are imported cases or relapses of previous acute disease.

Implementation of the Subprogramme "Prevention and Treatment of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Mental Health protection" of the State Programme "People's Health and Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus" for 2016-2020, comprehensive plans, outreach strategies providing for awareness-raising, legal, organisational, as well as educational measures aimed at reduction of alcohol consumption by the population and rejection of the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances allowed to reduce the total number of people seeking medical help from healthcare organisations due to the use of psychoactive substances in 2021 by 27 per cent compared to 2016.

To reduce the harm caused by excessive tobacco consumption, systematic work is being carried out in the Republic of Belarus to implement the main strategies of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control: smoking, tobacco products consumption, use of electronic smoking systems and systems for consumption of tobacco in public places are restricted; the list of public places where smoking is prohibited has been expanded; prices for tobacco products are regularly increased. The requirements for packaging and labelling of tobacco products in accordance with international standards have been defined; advertising of tobacco products, liquids for electronic smoking systems, and their sale to persons under 18 years of age are prohibited.

A comparative analysis of the results of STEPS studies on the prevalence of risk factors for non-communicable diseases conducted in the Republic of Belarus in 2016 and 2020 showed a 3 per cent decrease in the prevalence of tobacco use among people aged 18 to 69 years.

In the Republic of Belarus, continuous outreach work is underway to promote healthy lifestyles and raise awareness of the issues related to the

development of responsible behaviour skills and the prevention of diseases and addictions.

Special attention is paid to the reproductive health of students: educational institutions are taking active measures to create a healthy environment; students are trained to use their time for work and rest rationally and with health benefits, awareness-raising campaigns on combatting bad habits are conducted, sensitisation on the issues of early initiation of sexual activity and sexually transmitted diseases is conducted both as part of extracurricular activities and within the framework of academic subjects.

In 2019, the preventive project "Healthy Cities and Towns" was approved at the state level with the aim of minimizing the impact of risk factors such as consumption of tobacco and alcohol, irrational and unbalanced nutrition, and physical inactivity, and, as a result, reducing the risk of disease and mortality from non-communicable diseases. In 2021, the project was implemented in 147 settlements of Belarus.

Belarus is carrying out targeted work to prevent road accidents, which resulted in a 21.1 per cent reduction in the level of deaths and injuries on the roads in 2021.

## **SDG 4 “Quality Education”.**

In the Republic of Belarus, education is provided at all levels of basic and additional education and is a priority direction of the state policy.

The principle of inclusive education is defined as one of the principles of the state policy of Belarus in the field of education, ensuring equal access to education for all students, taking into account the diversity of special individual educational needs and individual capabilities of each student (including gifted and talented ones), whose individual needs are determined by the living situation, health status, and other circumstances.

Citizens of the Republic of Belarus have the right to receive free general secondary education; they have the opportunity to choose an educational institution, the form of education, the level of study of academic subjects, and educational programmes. At the level of general secondary education, conditions have been created for receiving education at home, according to an individual curriculum, as well as in healthcare institutions and sanatorium-and-spa organisations.

Belarus consistently demonstrates significant achievements in this area. In the 2020 Human Development Report of the UNDP, Belarus ranked 32nd in the ranking of countries according to the education level index. The indicator "duration of education" is 15.4 years, and the indicator "average duration of education" is 12.3 years.

Belarus ranked 36th out of 174 countries according to the human capital index calculated by the World Bank. This indicator is higher than the average for Europe, Central Asia, and upper-middle-income countries.

The prestige and quality of education in Belarus are evidenced by the increase in exports of educational services. More than 30,000 foreign citizens from 107 countries study in Belarus.

There are more than 7,300 educational institutions in Belarus, in which about 2 million children, pupils, and students are educated and brought up.

Belarus is the leader among the CIS countries in the coverage of the population with preschool education. In 2021, the coverage of children aged 1 to 6 years with preschool education services was 88.5 per cent. The coverage of preschool-age children with preparation for school is 100 per cent; the availability of preschool education institutions for children has reached 94.6 per cent.

In the 2021-2022 academic year, there are 2,967 educational institutions, including 25 private ones, implementing general secondary education programmes. About 1.65 million students study in general secondary education institutions. Education is available in one of the official languages: Belarusian or Russian. Every year, students of general secondary education institutions take part in international Olympiads.

All schools in urban and rural areas provide students of grades VIII-IX with the opportunity to study subjects at an advanced level; for students of grades X-XI specialized education is available, which allows them to study subjects at an advanced level and thus prepare effectively for admission to higher education institutions.

Students of specialized grades X-XI can also receive primary professional knowledge by studying in professionally oriented classes; students of basic grades X-XI master a professional training programme for workers (employees), upon completion of which they can pass a qualification exam and receive a certificate confirming relevant education.

Conditions have been created for continuous professional education. Vocational education institutions offer a mandatory course of social and humanitarian disciplines, within the framework of which students acquire knowledge and skills aimed at the promotion of sustainable development, including knowledge on human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, world citizenship, the value of cultural diversity, and the contribution of culture to sustainable development.

Education is financed at a level comparable to the world's leading countries: consolidated budget expenditures on education in 2021 amounted to 4.42 per cent of GDP, taking into account extra-budgetary sources - 4.8 per cent of GDP.

Ensuring the accessibility of education to students with special developmental needs in accordance with their health status and cognitive abilities at all levels of basic education and in the course of additional education is one of the basic principles of the state policy in the field of education. Children with special developmental needs enjoy equal rights with all students.

To ensure the accessibility and quality of the educational process, special conditions are created for obtaining education: pedagogical, medical, social, and other types of assistance are provided, without which it is impossible or difficult to master the content of special educational programmes; technical means of social rehabilitation, special educational curricula, programmes, textbooks and manuals, and special teaching methods are used, the adaptive educational environment is being created.

Targeted efforts are made to develop and improve integrated education and upbringing, as well as to engage children with developmental disabilities in the joint educational process, and leisure, cultural, sports, and creative activities with their healthy peers. Individual support in the educational process is provided to students with autistic disorders and is available for students with disorders of the musculoskeletal system and blind students. In the 2021-2022 academic year, more than 70 per cent of children with special developmental needs are studying in inclusive conditions at their places of residence.



Correctional and pedagogical assistance is provided to children with special developmental needs, who have difficulties in mastering the content of educational programmes of preschool and general secondary education: there are more than 3,600 facilities providing correctional and pedagogical assistance in institutions of preschool and general secondary education.

99.9 per cent of students with special developmental needs, including those with disabilities, receive special education and correctional and pedagogical assistance.

About 60 per cent of preschool, general secondary and special education institutions ensure barrier-free movement along any route in their buildings and premises, as well as access to information and any objects of educational institutions for students with special developmental needs as part of measures to create a barrier-free environment based on a comprehensive approach.

Programmes of additional adult education are implemented by about 400 educational institutions and organisations of different statuses, departmental subordination, and forms of ownership. Every year, about 350,000 people are enrolled in continuing vocational education in Belarus.

An important component of the practice-oriented model of education for sustainable development is the additional education of children and youth. Within the national system of additional education for children and youth, there are 265 institutions of additional education for children and youth that provide education to 385 thousand children (i.e. every third student enrolled in the general secondary education system).

The directions for further development of the sector are defined in the new edition of the Education Code of the Republic of Belarus, the Concept of the Development of the Education System of the Republic of Belarus until 2030, and the State Programme "Education and Youth Policy" for 2021-2025.

According to the above-mentioned documents, the education system is considered as an institution for the socialisation of youth which provides education and upbringing of the individual, forms their world view and broad erudition; and the development of the education system is aimed at increasing the competitiveness of affordable and high-quality education with account of the main trends in the development of the global educational space meeting the national interests and needs of the innovative economy and the principles of sustainable development of the country, as well as at strengthening the professional potential of young people and their involvement in socially useful activities, and supporting children's creativity.

In 2022, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education was established, whose powers include state accreditation of educational institutions, namely, establishing compliance of educational activities with educational standards, educational and curricular documentation of educational programmes, and other requirements in the field of education at all levels: general secondary,

vocational, specialized secondary, higher, additional adult education (retraining and advanced training of managers and specialists).

In today's realities, the development of digital education is becoming particularly relevant both for the training of personnel and for improving the digital competence of specialists already employed in the economy.

To achieve this objective, the State Programme "Digital Development of Belarus" for 2021-2025 provides for several measures to improve ICT skills, as well as to ensure the adaptation of the population to digital transformations (a platform for improving digital literacy of the population, creation of educational content for advanced training courses on digital development).

## **SDG 5 “Gender Equality”.**

The implementation of gender policy in Belarus is based on respect for national interests with account of generally recognized principles of international law and human rights, support for traditional values and cultural foundations of the Belarusian society. The promotion of equal rights and responsibilities of men and women is an integral part of the state policy towards the implementation of international commitments in this area.

According to the 2020 Human Development Report, Belarus ranks 31st out of 189 countries in terms of the gender inequality index; according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021, it ranks 33nd out of 156 countries and is one of the leaders among the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia in ensuring gender equality.

High positions in international rankings are among other things due to the high level of women's participation in decision-making.

Following the 2019 parliamentary elections, the representation of women in the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus increased to 34.7% of the total number of deputies of the House of Representatives and members of the Council of the Republic (in the previous convocation, the share of women was 33.7%).

According to the 2019 census, the share of women and girls in the total population is 53.8%.

Women account for over 55% of the total number of employees and realize their potential in all areas. They have a significant labour potential - about 40 per cent of working women have higher education. In 2021, the employment rate for women of working age was almost 84.5% (compared to 82.3% for men).

In 2017-2021, extensive measures were implemented in Belarus: the National Action Plan to Implement the Provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Belarus for 2017-2025 was adopted, and amendments were made to labour legislation with regard to the expansion of the labour rights of fathers and distance employment; the draft law "On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and their Social Integration" was developed.

In 2017-2019, the first cycle of the demographic research "Generations and Gender" based on the international methodology of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, a multi-indicator cluster survey to assess the situation of women and children (MICS 6), and International Forums of Women Leaders were held with the support of international organisations of the UN system.

Implementation of the Fifth National Action Plan to Promote Gender Equality for 2017-2020 allowed to make progress in gender-sensitive healthcare and gender equality in family relations. The next National Plan for 2021-2025 is aimed at further development of the necessary social conditions for the fullest realisation of the human potential of women and men.

Belarus has developed and is introducing the National Model of Reproductive Health and Family Planning, which provides for the organisation of men's health services. There are family planning offices in every women's clinic.

Gender aspects affecting the motivation to lead a healthy lifestyle and the prevalence of forms of health-saving behaviour have been studied. Studies have demonstrated the differences in the attitudes of women and men to their health and confirmed the need to take these features into account when promoting the norms and rules of a healthy lifestyle.

The work of adolescent-friendly centres has been organized on the premises of healthcare organisations. In 54 centres, on the terms of confidentiality, accessibility, and goodwill, adolescents and young people are consulted on somatic and reproductive health, responsible reproductive behaviour, modern methods of contraception, as well as on other issues relevant to adolescents and young people.

In 2017-2020, more than 400,000 teenagers turned to the centres, including more than 95,000 teenagers seeking psychological help (in 2020 - almost 66,000 teenagers, including more than 21,000 teenagers seeking psychological help).

In order to increase the involvement of fathers in the upbringing of children, a number of changes have been made to the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus: the father (stepfather) has been granted the right to take a short-term social leave upon the birth of a child (up to 14 days), take a leave in summer if raising a child with disability under the age of 18, take a leave before the expiration of 6 months of work with an employer if raising two or more children under the age of 14 (or a disabled child under the age of 18).

The guarantees provided for working mothers are extended to working single parents raising children.

With the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the "Parent-friendly Company" initiative was developed, its implementation began in 2022.

Gender equality issues are also taken into account in the new cycle of state programmes for 2021-2025, such as "People's Health and Demographic Security", "Social Protection", "Education and Youth Policy", "Labour Market and Employment Promotion", etc.

The system of gender statistics has been improved: a gender statistics portal has been launched on the website of the National Statistical Committee; gender statistics indicators have been supplemented with data on women's entrepreneurship and indicators related to powers and decision-making in the household.

In 2019, the statistical classifier "State Statistical Activities" was introduced, where gender statistics and statistics related to individual population groups are identified as the subject area for standard presentation of state

statistics.

### **Addressing gender violence.**

Since January 2022, the Law "On Amendments to the Laws on Crime Prevention" has been in force in Belarus, which provides for optimisation of targeted crime prevention measures with account of their application, strengthening interdepartmental interaction, expanding the capabilities of subjects of crime prevention in providing assistance to victims and citizens who have committed domestic violence.

There are 146 territorial social services centres and 2 social services centres for families and children. In the centres, victims of domestic violence and victims of human trafficking are provided with free-of-charge socio-psychological, socio-intermediary, information and consulting services, social patronage and temporary shelter.

Amendments have been made to the legislation on social services, according to which citizens now have the opportunity to check in a crisis room around the clock at the place of application, regardless of the place of residence (registration) and in the absence of an identity document.

To provide temporary shelter services, 137 crisis rooms work around the clock on the premises of the centres.

### **Gender education and sensitisation.**

The implementation of gender policy in the Republic of Belarus is based on the legal, organisational, and administrative foundations of gender equality. Institutions of general secondary education are co-educational. At the same time, in the Republic of Belarus, there are also educational institutions that admit girls (for example, the state educational institution "Zhodinskaya Women's Gymnasium") or boys (for example, Minsk City Cadet School) only, in institutions of general secondary education, separate lessons are held for boys and girls in such academic subjects as labour, physical culture, pre-conscription and medical training.

Since 2017, curricula at all levels of education have been updated with the aim of including gender equality issues in their content.

In 2020, gender equality issues were considered within the framework of 23 educational programmes for advanced training of teachers in the system of vocational and secondary specialized education.

According to the Global Innovation Index 2021, Belarus ranks 1st (out of 124 countries) in terms of the share of women with a master's degree and above in the total number of the employed population.

The situation in Belarusian science is traditionally considered relatively satisfactory in terms of equal opportunities for the development of the potential of men and women. The share of women in the total number of researchers

fluctuates at the level of 40% (2015 - 40,5%; 2019 - 39%). In Belarus, women make up 41% of the total number of candidates of sciences and 20% of the total number of doctors of sciences.

It seems that the interest of women with a degree in scientific careers and leadership positions is higher than the actual possibilities of its implementation. Thus in 2020, women accounted for 53.6% and 47.9% of the number of students in postgraduate and doctoral studies. Implementation of the principles of gender equality should be aimed at creating conditions for increasing the share of women with doctoral degrees and promoting them to leadership positions in scientific organisations of the country and in the economy as a whole.

### **Social support for women.**

The Republic of Belarus implements measures to develop and stimulate women's economic initiatives. This work is performed through effective interaction of public, private, financial, international, and non-profit institutions. Accumulation of opportunities and tools ensures more successful implementation of the agenda related to the creation of favourable conditions for the entry of an increasing number of women into business, as well as maximum coverage of the three main components: financial support, development of competencies and skills, and creation of appropriate infrastructure.

Belarus can boast of advanced women's entrepreneurship insofar as women constitute nearly one third of national business owners. An effective mechanism for the development of women's businesses is the allocation of non-refundable grants from the state. In 2021, women accounted for 47% of the total number of recipients of such grants. From 2017 to 2021, the grants were provided to 3,700 women; the amount of the grant is 11 basic units of the subsistence minimum for urban areas, and 15 basic units for rural areas.

JSC "Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus" within the framework of the State Programme "Small and Medium-sized Entrepreneurship" for 2021-2025 has developed a separate product "Support for Women's Entrepreneurship" and provides financing to business entities with the share of women's participation in the registered capital of at least 50 per cent and headed by a woman, as well as to individual female entrepreneurs.

The demand for training of women entrepreneurs, considering the behavioural characteristics of this target audience, as well as women who are looking for opportunities to implement their business initiative, is satisfied by the representative offices of international organisations. In October 2021, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme within the framework of the initiative to promote sustainable recovery from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, Business and Career Days for Women were held. The participants had the opportunity to attend free online lectures and other interactive events, forming practical skills for business and career development,

including through the use of examples of successful female entrepreneurs.

In the capital and regions, there are platforms supporting women's leadership and the development of new business ideas by non-governmental organisations. Among like-minded people, women consider specific cases, find business partners, and conduct training to increase their self-confidence.

JSC "Belinvestbank" has created a Centre for Support and Development of Women's Entrepreneurship. Since 2021, this bank has been a partner of the Ministry of Economy in the implementation of the State Programme to Strengthen the Capacity of the Centre for Support and Development of Women's Entrepreneurship. In 2021, information and educational meetings for female individual entrepreneurs from all regions of the country were held on the premises of this Centre within the framework of the educational project of Belinvestbank "The Secrets of a Successful Business".

In 2021, within the framework of the National Competition "Entrepreneur of the Year" organized annually by the Ministry of Economy within the framework of the State Programme, Belinvestbank established its own nomination "Best Women's Business".

Mechanisms for the reintegration of women in the labour market (vocational training, retraining, advanced training) are being improved.

In 2021, 1,300 unemployed women were referred to vocational training, retraining and advanced training (34.2 per cent of the total number of unemployed persons referred to training). In 2017-2021 - 11,500 women (36.8 per cent of the total number).

Over the past five years, the number of unemployed persons has been decreasing according to the ILO methodology. In 2021, the number of unemployed persons amounted to 196,900, which is 32.9 per cent less than in 2017. Of the total number of unemployed persons, 60.6% were men and 39.4% were women.

With the assistance of the employment service, the average period of employment of registered unemployed persons decreased from 2 months in 2017 to 1.3 months in 2021, for women - from 2.1 to 1.4 months, for men - from 2 to 1.3 months.

### **Pensions.**

In the Republic of Belarus, there is practically no gender gap in the level of pensions. Since 2014, the ratio of the average size of pensions awarded to women to the average size of pensions awarded to men has been about 98 per cent (in 2021 - 99 per cent).

Pension legislation takes into account the issues of equal access of men and women to the social protection system, as well as unpaid care for family members and household work performed by women. The total (cumulative) length of employment used to calculate the amount of pension includes the periods of care

for young children and disabled persons provided by a woman. The award of an insurance retirement pension is conditional on a qualifying period of payments to the insurance fund — from 18 years in 2021 to 20 years in 2025. For women who provided care for young children, children with disabilities, and adults with disabilities of the 1st category for long periods of time, the qualifying period has been reduced to 10 years.



## **SDG 6 “Clear Water and Sanitation”.**

### **The Water Strategy.**

Belarus has approved the National Strategy of Water Resources Management in the Context of Climate Change until 2030 (the Water Strategy).

The Water Strategy is aimed at improving the efficiency of the use of water resources to ensure the sustainable economic growth of the country in a changing climate and create conditions for the conservation of aquatic ecosystems. The need to adopt the Water Strategy is related to one of the objectives of the Programme of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025.

As part of the Water Strategy, an assessment of the current potential of water resources and trends in water use, including a breakdown by the main types of economic activity over the past five years, was conducted, and evidence of the impact of climate change on water resources and its possible consequences was collected, problems of water resources management requiring solutions in this area were identified, and a corresponding action plan was developed.

When the objectives and targets of the Water Strategy were defined, their compatibility with the indicators of progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals was ensured.

The expected results of the implementation of the Water Strategy are as follows:

- an increase up to 75 per cent of the share of surface water bodies that have been assigned the ecological status "good and above" by 2025, up to 85 per cent by 2030;

- establishment of the index of discharge of insufficiently treated wastewater into water bodies (compared to the level of 2015) at the level of no more than 30 per cent by 2025, and 0 per cent by 2030;

- progress in the introduction of comprehensive water resources management - at least 80 per cent by 2025, and 100 per cent by 2030;

- an increase in the share of the area of transboundary river basins in respect of which international agreements on cooperation in the field of protection and use of transboundary waters are in force - at least 78 per cent by 2025, and 100 per cent by 2030.

### **The subprogramme “Pure Water”.**

Belarus is implementing the State Programme "Comfortable Housing and Favourable Environment" for 2021-2025, one of the subprogrammes of which "Pure Water" focused on supplying consumers with drinking-quality water; providing the population with centralized water supply and water disposal (sewerage) systems; improving the quality of wastewater treatment and reliability of water supply and water disposal (sewerage) systems.

According to the document, by 2025, it is planned to: provide all consumers

(100 per cent) with drinking-quality water supply (currently 95.9 per cent); transition to supplying all residents of Minsk (100 per cent) with drinking water from underground water supply sources (at the end of 2021 - 60.4 per cent); cover 93.2 per cent of the population with centralized water supply systems and 79.3 per cent of the population with water disposal (sewerage) systems "(at the end of 2021 - 91 per cent and 78.8 per cent, respectively); construct and reconstruct 70 wastewater treatment facilities; replace water supply and water disposal (sewerage) networks with expired service life - annually at least 3 per cent of the total length of water supply and water disposal (sewerage) networks with expired service life.

*In 2021, the construction of a municipal wastewater treatment facility in Zhahinka (Gomel region) was completed, and facilities for the treatment of surface wastewater discharged into the Mukhavets River and the Shevnya River were constructed (Brest region). In Mogilev region, the reconstruction of a wastewater treatment facility in Yelizovo (Mogilev region) was completed.*

As for the preservation of the water potential of Belarus, the strategic goal here is to increase the efficiency of the use of water resources and improve their quality with account of the needs of the population and potential climate change.

This goal is achieved through a comprehensive approach to solving organisational, legal, financial, and economic problems related to water use and water protection.

## **SDG 7 “Affordable and Clean Energy”.**

According to the priorities of the energy policy of Belarus, consistent efforts are made to supply the population with affordable and clean energy.

Ensuring reliable power supply to consumers in Belarus and their access to power supply is the objective of state and industry programmes.

The main directions for the development of the national power grid are defined in the Comprehensive Plan for the Development of the Electric Power Industry until 2025 with account of the commissioning of the Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant and the sectoral programmes developed on its basis for the comprehensive modernisation of electric power and gas industries, the State Programme "Construction of Housing" for 2021-2025, and the State Programme "Comfortable Housing and Favourable Environment" for 2021-2025.

In accordance with these programme documents, work is underway in the national power grid to modernize and develop generating sources, and electrical and thermal networks through the introduction of high-performance equipment;

apply advanced technologies with the decommissioning of less economical and outdated generation facilities;

ensure maximum possible use of the country's own energy resources in the fuel balance;

diversify the types and suppliers of fuel and energy resources, including through the construction of renewable sources and the use of nuclear energy; improve and retrofit gas facilities.

As of January 1, 2022, the length of power lines amounted to more than 281,200 km; natural gas was supplied to all district centres and cities of the country, as well as to more than 3,500 rural settlements; the length of gas pipelines was more than 65,400 km.

Belarus has a developed system of electric and gas networks, electricity is affordable, there is no deficit in the installed capacity of energy sources, and 100 per cent of the population has access to electricity.

## **The Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant.**

For the construction of the Belarusian NPP, the Russian project "NPP-2006" of generation "3+" with enhanced safety was selected. It includes two power units with a total capacity of 2,400 MW.

On June 10, 2021, the first power unit of the Belarusian NPP was put into operation. It is currently operating at its rated capacity. In general, since its inclusion in the national power grid, the first power unit has generated more than 8.6 billion kWh of electricity, which has allowed to replace more than 2 billion cubic metres of natural gas.

Currently, the construction and commissioning of the second power unit of

the Belarusian NPP are underway. The second unit of the Belarusian NPP is 96 per cent complete; its commissioning is planned for 2022.

After the commissioning of the Belarusian NPP, its average annual base load output will be 17-18 billion kWh, which will allow to substitute up to 4.5 billion cubic metres of natural gas per year.

## **SDG 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth”.**

### **GDP trends.**

In the period 2015-2021, real GDP growth rates were volatile: they dropped in 2015-2016 and grew in 2017-2021 (with the exception of an objective decline in 2020). The decline in GDP in 2020 was related to a decrease in business activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, against the background of the recovery of external demand, the Belarusian economy also recovered: the GDP growth rate was 102.3 per cent, which is 1.6 per cent higher than the pre-pandemic level.

### **Employment of the population.**

Belarus maintains a fairly high level of employment. In 2020, it was 67.5 per cent of the workforce, which is almost the same as the level observed in EU countries during this period (67.8 per cent). Among the working-age population, this indicator is much higher: 83.0 per cent of the population of this age are employed in the economy.

One of the competitive advantages of Belarus is the highly educated workforce. In the period 2016-2020, the share of working persons with higher and secondary specialized education in the republic increased by 4.3 percentage points and amounted to 56.8 per cent in 2020.

The implementation of a set of measures under the subprogramme "Employment Promotion" of the State Programme on Social Protection and Employment Promotion for 2016-2020 allowed to reduce the unemployment rate according to the methodology of the International Labour Organisation by 1.2 percentage points to 4 per cent in 2020 with a target value of no more than 5.0 per cent.

A more significant decrease in this indicator was observed among men: 1.8 percentage points versus 0.4 percentage points among women. As a result, the gender gap in the unemployment rate has been reduced by almost 2 times (from 2.9 percentage points to 1.5).

The implementation of a set of measures to promote youth employment has allowed to reduce unemployment in this socio-demographic group. The unemployment rate of young people aged 15-24 in 2019 was 10.2 per cent, having decreased by 0.7 percentage points compared to 2015.

The objective to significantly reduce the share of young people who do not work, do not study and do not acquire professional skills has been accomplished. In the period 2016-2020, the share of such young people (aged 15 to 24 years) decreased by 1.3 percentage points. Nationwide, the value of this indicator in 2020 was 6.8 per cent, which is 2 times lower than the average for the EU countries.

### **Incomes and wages.**

The most important priority with regard to incomes and wages is improving the quality of life of the population, creating equal conditions for people to have

decent work regardless of gender, age, or occupation.

The government adopted targeted measures to increase wages, which allowed to ensure their growth in 2016-2020 by more than 1.3 times.

In the previous five years, it was not possible to reduce the wage gap between women and men: the ratio of the average wages of women and men in the republic changed from 78.5 in 2016 to 73.5 per cent in 2020.

The gender pay gap deepened in the field of information and communications, where the ratio of wages of women and men in the period 2016-2020 decreased by 9 percentage points (from 64.3 to 55.3 per cent).

At the same time, positive trends in the ratio of wages of men and women are noted for such types of economic activities as public administration (87.8 per cent in 2016 and 94.0 per cent in 2020), and transport activities, warehousing, postal and courier activities (91.4 per cent and 96.0 per cent, respectively).

In 2019, in the Republic of Belarus, the most significant gender wage gap by occupation (38.8 per cent) and the most significant increase in the indicator (+21.9 percentage points compared to 2011) was noted among specialists of the highest qualification level. This trend is largely due to the increase in the number of highly paid IT specialists in the labour market, among whom men predominate.

Among the heads of organisations and structural divisions, the gender pay gap was registered at the level of 27.5 per cent (+4.7 percentage points). At the same time, the disparities among skilled workers reduced from 24.4 per cent in 2011 to 19.0 per cent in 2019.

In 2019, the gender pay gap among employees in the age groups of 25-29 and 30-39 years was 32.0 per cent and 33.0 per cent, respectively, gradually decreasing to 11.6 per cent in the age of 50-54 years, and rising again to 21.8 per cent among employees aged 60 and above.

The situation with wages of people with disabilities is improving: the ratio of the average hourly wage of people with disabilities to the average hourly wage of employees as a whole was 85.7 per cent in 2020 (76.0 per cent in 2019).

The key instrument for the implementation of the state policy in the field of employment promotion is the State Programme "Labour Market and Employment Promotion" for 2021-2025.

The activities carried out within the framework of this Programme are aimed at improving the effectiveness of the employment policy by ensuring a balance between demand and supply of labour in the labour market, promoting the quality of labour resources and increasing the competitiveness of the labour force, stimulating economic activity of the population, and involving economically inactive population in labour activity.

The main attention is paid to the implementation of active measures to ensure the employment of the population and to keep the unemployment rate

within socially acceptable limits. Attention is paid to the development of sustainable tourism, which contributes to the creation of jobs, the development of local culture and the production of local products.

In particular, the State Programme "Hospitable Belarus " for 2021-2025 is being implemented, measures are being taken to support domestic and incoming tourism in the Republic of Belarus.

In order to implement the state policy in the field of employment promotion and provision of appropriate guarantees for citizens, the state employment service is working, and the republican database of vacancies is maintained.

In 2021, the difficult situation caused by the spread of the pandemic in the world had a significant impact on the labour market. At the same time, the situation in the labour market remains quite manageable: the employment rate of the working-age population remains at a high level - 83.3 per cent for the working-age population, 67.3 per cent for the population aged 15-74 years, 65.7 per cent for the population aged 16-30 years. At the same time, while men predominate among the employed population of the working age, after the retirement age, it is mostly women who continue to work.

In 2021, 136,700 people applied for employment assistance. More than half (79.3 per cent) of citizens in need of work were employed in permanent jobs (108,400 people), 3,700 people were referred to training (5.6 per cent), and 75 per cent of them received training tailored to the requirements of potential employers.

In 2021, 63,600 people were employed through the provision of electronic services related to assistance in the employment of citizens with the use of the nationwide database of vacancies.

As a result, as of January 1, 2022, 5,300 people were registered as unemployed with 92,000 vacancies announced by employers. Of the total number of unemployed persons, 60.6% were men and 39.4% were women.

As a result of the measures taken, there is a positive trend towards a reduction of the unemployment rate at the age of 15-74 years to 3.9 per cent, and at the working age - to 3.8 per cent.

For vulnerable categories of citizens, the state provides additional employment guarantees regardless of age. In 2021, 61.3 per cent of unemployed persons were given jobs with additional employment guarantees.

In addition, the necessary conditions have been created for the realisation of the right of disabled people to work. When applying to labour, employment, and social protection authorities, this category of citizens is entitled to a wider range of opportunities related to assistance in employment:

obtaining a referral for employment by a specific employer and in a specific profession (specialty), including in additional jobs created in specialized organisations;

- employment according to established quotas;
- the opportunity to undergo vocational training and obtain a profession (specialty) on a priority basis at the expense of funds allocated for financing employment promotion measures;
- referral for adaptation to work;
- support (including financial support) in the organisation and development of individual entrepreneurship.

Currently, in order to expand the opportunities for maximum employment of people with disabilities, a draft law is being developed, which provides for a number of measures to improve the mechanism for employment of people with disabilities, including the establishment of quotas for the employment of people with disabilities by organisations.

In 2021, the government approved the Strategy for the Development of the State Youth Policy of the Republic of Belarus until 2030, which defines the approaches to improvement of the conditions for effective participation of young people in the economic development of the Republic of Belarus.

The promotion of youth employment in the Republic of Belarus is carried out within the framework of the State Programme "Education and Youth Policy" for 2021-2025, the promotion of creative work of young scientists is being improved, and grants of the President of the Republic of Belarus are provided in such areas as science, education, healthcare, and culture.

In 2021, organisations of all forms of ownership hired about 95,000 young people for whom this was their first job under an employment contract. The State Employment Service employed 49,000 young citizens.

Special attention is paid to the organisation of vocational education and training for unemployed youth, especially minors who do not have work experience. In 2021, more than 30 per cent of the total number of people referred for training by the employment service were young people.

Unemployed persons who have reached the age of 18 and have decided to set up their business in the form of individual entrepreneurship, a private unitary enterprise, or a peasant farm in order to provide services in the field of agro-ecotourism, as well as to engage in craft activities, are entitled to a subsidy from the state extra-budgetary fund for social protection of the population. On average, 32 per cent of the unemployed citizens who received subsidies to set up their own businesses in 2021 were young people.

The measures taken have allowed to reduce the level of youth unemployment. In 2021, there were 64,500 unemployed young people aged 16-30 years amounting to 32.8 per cent of the total number of unemployed persons. The unemployment rate in this age group was 6.2 per cent.

### **Development of the digital economy.**

The most important condition for the creation and development of the digital economy is the presence of a developed information and communication



infrastructure. The Republic of Belarus has a data transmission network that meets international standards, reliable data storage and processing centres, identification mechanisms, online payment systems, modern electronic services, and information security tools.

The accelerated transition to new digital realities is enabled by the introduction of biometric documents (ID cards) from September 1, 2021. They serve as an alternative to the internal passport of a citizen of the Republic of Belarus and offer a wide range of opportunities for the population to receive public services online. The introduction of the ID cards is an incentive for more intensive digitisation of data, and the transition of many interaction processes into the electronic form.

In order to ensure development in this area, the State Programme "Digital Development of Belarus" for 2021-2025 is being implemented. It is the main practical tool for the introduction of advanced information technologies in the national economy and the society in the coming period.

Within the framework of the State Programme, measures are taken to accomplish the following objectives:

- further development of the national infrastructure, first and foremost the introduction of the 5G cellular communication technology in the Republic of Belarus;

- development and popularisation of the state system for the provision of electronic services, the use of mobile electronic digital signature;

- implementation of electronic education, healthcare, employment, logistics, trade, etc., creation and up-scaling of Industry 4.0 and smart city technologies. Currently, in the field of education, work is underway to: create a sectoral digital platform and develop electronic services and analytical tools on its basis for effective interaction of students, educational institutions, and educational authorities.

- introduce services that record students' activities, accumulate and analyse data about them in order to address the needs of students and provide personalized educational pathways;

- create and develop new interactive educational information resources.

To improve the quality of medical care for the population, measures are being implemented with a focus on:

- maximum digital transformation of internal and external business processes, including the introduction of an integrated electronic medical card, ensuring the interaction of healthcare organisations within the unified information space of the industry;

- modernisation of the republican telemedicine consulting system;
- development of systems for monitoring public health and epidemiological well-being, as well as systems supporting clinical decision-making and predictive analytics.

The following measures are taken to improve the efficiency of organisations in the construction sector:

- creation of unified information space of the sector on the basis of the State Construction Portal (*sectoral digital platform*);

- digitisation of public services and administrative procedures accompanying construction activities (*issuance of permits, acceptance of facilities into operation, etc.*);

- transition to the use of building information modelling technologies.

Similar large-scale projects are being implemented in the field of labour relations and social protection, protection of public order, standardisation, foreign economic activities, etc.

The work on digital development is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- The state should become proactive: the main task is to make sure that people receive the required help from the state without repeatedly contacting state structures. The required certificates, identity papers and other documents, as well as ways to obtain them, should be primarily available in electronic form;

- Employers should more actively develop mechanisms to ensure the implementation of the extraterritorial principle in employment and use information technologies in order to attract specialists from different regions to work without the need to change their place of residence (website administration, online consulting, translations from foreign languages, video surveillance points, etc.), which will reduce the gap between the capital and the regions, providing citizens of the country with access to a wide range of professions, occupations and jobs in accordance with their vocation, abilities, education, and professional training;

- rapid digitalisation of the economy and social sphere: the use of modern IT solutions in housing and communal services, construction and territorial planning, transport infrastructure, healthcare, education, law enforcement and other areas to create a comfortable and safe environment for citizens;

- development of the education system and improvement of IT skills of the population in order to create conditions for the perception of the above-mentioned innovations.

## **SDG 9 “Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure”.**

Belarus is focused on the development of the IT sector and the transition to a digital economy. Belarus is among the world leaders in the export of IT services per capita.

Currently, in Belarus, almost a quarter of the total number of university students receive education in STEM specialities, including in about 70 IT specialisations. The annual output of IT specialists with higher education in Belams is about 7,000 people. Their training is conducted by 21 universities in the country. Belarus intends to increase the share of the information and communication technologies sector in GDP to 7.5 per cent in 2025.

### **Industrialisation.**

Industrial development is one of the main pillars of the Belamsian economy. Industrial development largely determines the main economic trends in Belarus. Industrial modernisation is inextricably linked with the introduction of innovations in production processes, the development of high-tech industries, the expansion of small business opportunities and the greening of production.

One of the criteria of growth in the industrialisation of the economy is the increase in the share of the manufacturing industry in the country's GDP.

In 2021, the value-added share of the manufacturing industry in the country's GDP increased by 2.2 percentage points compared to 2015 and amounted to 22.9 per cent. In 2020, the indicator increased by 0.8 percentage points compared to 2015.

The industrial competitiveness index reflects the country's ability to increase the share of its products in the international and domestic market through technological development of manufacturing industries and activities creating higher added value. In 2019, the Republic of Belarus ranked 46th in the world competitiveness index and climbed one step higher compared to its position in 2018.

In Belarus, in 2017-2020, the number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in the manufacturing industry was on the increase and at the beginning of 2021 amounted to 14,985 organisations.

The share of SMEs in the total volume of the manufacturing industry of the republic is 21.3 per cent.

Investments in fixed capital of industrial SMEs are characterized by a positive annual trend. By the end of 2020, the growth rate was 119.3 per cent compared to 2018.

The innovative structure of the industrial complex is ensured with the help of research and innovation support programmes. Increasing the technological level of industrial production contributes to increasing the depth of resource processing and reducing the anthropogenic impact on the environment.

### **Innovation.**

The main instrument for the implementation of the state innovation policy

and support of innovation activity in the country is the State Programme on Innovative Development. It includes a list of specific projects to create new and modernize existing production facilities in Belarus and measures aimed at improving the conditions for innovation and, in particular, the development of innovation infrastructure.

As a result of the implementation of the State Programme on Innovative Development for 2016-2020, more than 1,300 innovative solutions were developed, including world-class ones.

In particular, the equipment developed by JSC "Planar" for the formation of topological structures on photomasks has no analogues in the world and is already being supplied to the markets of Germany, Israel, South Korea, and China.

A method of surgical treatment of thoracic aortic aneurysm involving the use of an exoprosthesis made of biological material has been introduced in Belarusian clinics. This solution reduces surgical trauma, the duration of treatment of patients, and the number of postoperative complications. The cost of treatment is reduced by 20 per cent.

Unique X-ray inspection and medical equipment, desktop analytical instruments and non-destructive testing equipment developed and manufactured by the Belarusian company "ADANI" are supplied to the markets of 70 countries around the world. The company has developed a CT scanner, which is 30 per cent cheaper than world analogues and supplies it to clinics in Belarus.

Belkommunmash Holding has launched the production of electric buses, and some of the products are exported. In order to create an infrastructure for electric transport, the production of stationary electric charging stations has been set up.

The State Programme on Innovative Development is financed from budgetary and extra-budgetary sources. \$ 1 of public investment provides a return of more than \$19 due to the sales of innovative products. 65 per cent of the products are exported. The results of the State Programme on Innovative Development for 2016-2020 are as follows:

The number of subjects of the innovation infrastructure doubled, including technoparks, technology transfer centres, and other organizations acting as intermediaries and assisting innovators. The network covered all regions and many districts of the country; the first children's technopark was created in Belarus;

The share of innovatively active organizations in the total number of industrial enterprises amounted to 26.2 per cent (compared to 20.4 per cent in 2015).

The share of innovative products in the total volume of products shipped by industrial organisations is 17.9 per cent (compared to 16.3 in 2015).

The share of science-intensive and high-tech products in the total volume of Belarusian exports increased to 38.4 per cent (compared to 33.2 in 2015).

The development of the national innovation ecosystem in the medium term is associated with the State Programme on Innovative Development for 2021-2025. It supports innovative projects implemented by organizations of all forms of ownership in the areas of scientific, scientific and technical, and innovative activities prioritized by Belarus with an optimal combination of the development of national scientific and technical potential, promotion of domestic technologies on the world market, and the transfer of foreign technologies. The country will continue the previous focus on the following areas:

- stimulation of the development of technologies, goods and services of the fifth and sixth technological paradigms, as well as export-oriented solutions, including through their priority financing;

- formation of a fully-fledged market of scientific, technical, and innovative products, improvement of the institutional environment, development and stimulation of innovative entrepreneurship, in particular, among young people;

- development of innovation infrastructure and a national intellectual property system.

The Hi-Tech Park and the Belarusian and Chinese Industrial Park "the Great Stone".

In 2005, the Hi-Tech Park — the Belarusian "Silicon Valley" — was created. The HTP is the main IT cluster in Central and Eastern Europe and makes Belarus one of the leading centres of competence in the field of information technologies in the CIS and Eastern Europe. There are 1,065 residents in the Park; about 76,000 workers are employed in its enterprises (they make up 1.5 per cent of the total number of people employed in the economy of Belarus and produce 4 per cent of the county's GDP).

Since 2014, the Great Stone Industrial Park, created by Belarus and China, has operated as a high-tech international business platform. The priority areas of the Park's activities are mechanical engineering, chemistry, logistics, biotechnology, electronics and telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, research and development.

In the Park, there are about 90 resident companies that have access to fully established production, engineering, transport, customs, and socio-administrative infrastructure, have significant tax preferences, as well as a special business service system.

### **Development of infrastructure.**

To coordinate the issues of medium- and long-term development of infrastructure, including within the framework of public-private partnership, the Interdepartmental Infrastructure Coordination Council (IICC), which is a permanent collegial body, has been functioning in Belarus since 2014.

In 2021, the National Infrastructure Plan of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025 (NIP) was approved. The NIP is a medium-term strategic planning document defining the development of the country's infrastructure and reflecting the need for infrastructure projects (engineering, transport, and social infrastructure facilities) for the subsequent determination of the optimal resource allocation option. The NIP includes more than 1,100 engineering, transport, and social infrastructure projects worth about 30.0 billion rubles.

### **Development of road infrastructure.**

The development of the public road infrastructure of the Republic of Belarus is carried out within the framework of the activities envisaged in the State Programme "Roads of Belarus" for 2021-2025.

The target indicator "density of paved public roads per 1000 sq. km of the territory of the republic" for 2021 was achieved and amounted to 364.0 km.

The indicator "percentage of the rural population that live within two kilometres of an all-season road" for 2021 is estimated at 100 per cent.

In 2021, 31.8 km of republican highways were put into operation.

### **Development of a cellular mobile telecommunication network.**

At the end of 2021, the number of base stations used for the development of the 4G LTE cellular mobile telecommunications network amounted to 5,004 units. This allows 97.4 per cent of the population of the Republic of Belarus to have access to modem mobile telecommunication services of the fourth generation. Currently, more than 5.6 million people actively use LTE data transmission services.

Coverage of the population with mobile telecommunication services of both the second and third generations is 99.9 per cent.

From 2016 to 2020, the construction of fibre-optic communication lines in all settlements with 100 households and more was completed. In 2021, it became possible to connect fibre-optic lines to 122 settlements with 50-100 households (64.7 per cent), which allows to provide high-speed broadband Internet access services at a qualitatively new level, reduces digital inequality, and also expands public access to electronic services.

Thanks to the construction and modernization of telecommunication networks (transition of subscribers to a multi-service platform, construction of fibre-optic networks connected directly to consumers), the number of subscribers of fixed broadband Internet access amounted to about 3,238 million subscribers. Of these, 70.98 per cent use this service at speeds of more than 10 Mbit/s, which is 3.83 per cent more than at the end of 2020. At the same time, the share of subscribers using the service at speeds of more than 100 Mbit/s increased from 25 to 34 per cent.

### **SDG 10 “Reduced Inequalities”.**

Belarus has also achieved significant results in addressing the issues of unjustified disparities in the incomes of the population.

Since 2000, Belarus has maintained a low level of personal income disparities. In 2021, the Gini coefficient (the income concentration index) was 0.2762.

In Belarus, due attention is paid to migration policy. The regulation of migration flows is carried out taking into account the socio-economic conditions and the demographic structure of the country's regions and is aimed at protecting the national labour market from the uncontrolled influx of foreign labour force, overcoming the negative consequences of illegal migration, stimulating the reduction of emigration outflow of scientific, technical, intellectual, and creative potential from the Republic of Belarus, and integration of migrants into the Belarusian society.

Additionally, in order to address the imbalance between labour supply and demand in certain professional categories, as well as to mitigate (reduce) the negative impact of the demographic factor on the national labour market, access to the labour market has been simplified for foreign highly qualified specialists and foreigners employed in professions (specialties) that are included in the list of most-wanted professions and vacancies that are not popular among citizens of the Republic of Belarus.

Special attention is paid to strengthening and improving the system for rehabilitation of persons with disabilities - the domestic rehabilitation industry, artistic creativity, physical culture and sports services for people with disabilities are developing, and public awareness of the main problems faced by people with disabilities as well as the available opportunities for their solution is improving.

In 2021, the key measures to support people with disabilities were carried out within the framework of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Belarus. Creation of a barrier-free environment for the disabled, as well as its monitoring were continued.

An important part of these measures is the creation of a barrier-free environment at social and transport infrastructure facilities and within urban road networks, taking into account a comprehensive approach and ensuring unhindered access to necessary services.

In 2021, labour, employment, and social protection authorities provided all citizens in need with the full spectrum of technical means of social rehabilitation.

## **SDG 11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities”.**

### **Construction of sustainable cities and settlements.**

Belarus has developed and approved legal and technical regulations in the field of architectural, urban planning, and construction activities, which are aimed at creating a comfortable, energy-efficient and safe urban environment, and forming preferences to ensure the comprehensive development of residential areas with the organization of a comfortable living environment including social and engineering infrastructure, as well as recreational and green areas.

In accordance with the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus until 2035, urban planning documentation provides for the formation of an urban environment based on functional zoning, comprehensive urban reconstruction of inefficiently used territories, including industrial zones, formation of a system of public landscaped green areas, and improvement of information support for urban development activities with the participation of the population in the urban planning process.

According to the concept of "sustainable cities and settlements", by 2030 it is planned to:

- provide the population with access to safe, affordable, accessible and environmentally sustainable transport systems, and enhance the use of public transport, including for those who are in a vulnerable situation, women, children, the disabled and the elderly (*it is planned to develop public passenger transport systems in urban areas and increase their share in the volume of passenger transportation by all modes of transport*);

- expand the scope of inclusive and environmentally sustainable urbanization, as well as the opportunities for comprehensive, sustainable, and inclusive planning and management of settlements;

- develop environmental reports on strategic environmental assessment for urban development projects that are subject to strategic environmental assessment;

- ensure the introduction of participatory planning methods in special urban planning projects related to planning of public green areas in cities and city districts.

- ensure universal access to safe, accessible, and inclusive green areas and public places, especially for women and children, the elderly and the disabled;

- maintain and develop positive economic, social, and environmental ties between urban, suburban, and rural areas based on improved national and regional development planning, which takes into account population dynamics and provides for balanced territorial development and expanded opportunities for the use of budget funds.

When designing urban planning projects, a strategy for the development of regions and (or) settlements is envisaged with due regard for the scope and level of the project; population dynamics are taken into account and design solutions



are developed factoring in the projected population; various development options are considered with the aim of choosing the most optimal one for balanced territorial development.

A comprehensive future-oriented project "National Electric Transport" is being implemented in Belarus, the share of electric transport in the total volume of urban passenger transport is approaching 35 per cent. In order to stimulate the development of the electric vehicle industry, legislative measures supporting the production and use of electric vehicles have been improved.

### **Smart city technologies.**

One of the main priorities of the Republic of Belarus is regional digital development focused on creating equal opportunities in the regions to achieve a high level and quality of life for the population through the introduction of smart city technologies.

The main mechanism for the development of smart city technologies in all regions of the country with the aim of achieving the sustainable development goals and reducing interregional disparities in the level and quality of life of the population is the project "Smart Cities of Belarus".

The project is being implemented in accordance with the State Programme "Digital Development of Belarus" for 2021-2025. Taking into account the scale and significance of the project, it has been included in the list of comprehensive "projects of the future" of the Republic of Belarus.

The future-oriented project "Smart Cities of Belarus" is part of the process of overall digital transformation of Belarus aimed at achieving the status of an IT-oriented state.

The project corresponds to the priorities of scientific and technological development of developed countries and provides for the incorporation of smart cities into the digital state ecosystem, integration of existing and emerging smart solutions (state, sectoral, public, and private) within the boundaries of administrative and territorial units, as well as the provision of services by digital platforms for solving a wide range of tasks related to ensuring a comfortable living environment, including the issues of safety, life, transport, ecology, housing and communal services, energy, construction, social services, health, and education.

To date, within the framework of the project, work is underway to create infrastructural and technical conditions for the introduction of modern urban management systems (housing and communal services, accounting and disposal of property, construction and territorial planning, management of urban and transport infrastructure, healthcare, education, public safety, environmental monitoring, etc.), expansion of the range of electronic and information services available to citizens, and the development of services for receiving feedback from the population.

The developed Action Plan for the Implementation of the Comprehensive Future-oriented Project "Smart Cities of Belarus" provides for measures to create:

- a model public regional digital platform "Smart City (Region)";
- information systems for automated environmental monitoring;
- a system of traffic management and road safety;
- digital infrastructure and services, high-performance data transmission networks. Data processing infrastructure (data centres) is being created in Minsk, regional and district centres.

The design of a traffic control centre and other components of an intelligent transport system has also begun.

The total amount of financing for this future-oriented project for 2021-2025 is more than 900 million rubles allocated from the republican budget; in 2021, more than 290 million rubles were spent on the implementation of infrastructure measures.

*By 2025, it is planned to cover 17 cities and regions with the model public regional digital platform "Smart City (Region)".*

*2 data centres are under construction in the cities of Minsk and Borisov (57 racks, the degree of completion is more than 95 per cent), design and estimate documentation has been developed (expert assessment has been conducted) for the creation of 4 data centres in the cities of Brest, Vitebsk, Grodno, and Mogilev (48 racks), and documentation is being prepared for 3 data centres in Minsk and Minsk region (310 racks).*

It is expected that the introduced innovations and the created technological conditions will increase the investment attractiveness of the regions, and provide the necessary support to transform them into real points of economic growth, of the Republic of Belarus.

As a result of consistent implementation of the project "Smart Cities of Belarus", a modern regional management system will be built to serve as a basis for comprehensive digital transformation of the economy and the social sphere of the Republic of Belarus.

## **SDG 12 “Responsible Consumption and Production”.**

### **Solid municipal waste and secondary material resources.**

Since 2017, Belarus has been implementing the National Strategy for Management of Solid Municipal Waste (SMW) and Secondary Material Resources (SMRs) in the Republic of Belarus until 2035.

About 3.9 million tons of solid municipal waste are generated annually in Belarus, which is about 6 per cent of the total amount of waste generated.

Today, as a result of development and improvement of the SMW management system, the latter covers the entire territory of the republic and ensures collection and disposal of SMW in a manner which is safe both for humans and the environment. At the same time, the infrastructure and manageability of the waste collection, stockpiling, removal, and disposal system are evolving in Belarus.

Belarusian legislation in the field of MSW management meets international standards; in the Republic of Belarus, by analogy with the EU countries, the principle of extended producer responsibility has been introduced, which provided additional economic incentives to enhance the collection and processing of secondary material resources.

Long-term goals and objectives in the management of MSW and SMRs are defined in the National Strategy for the Management of Solid Municipal Waste and Secondary Material Resources in the Republic of Belarus until 2035.

The National Strategy defines the principles, priorities, and pillars that should be incorporated in regulations, state and regional programmes, and investment projects to ensure environmentally sound and cost-effective management of SMW and SMRs.

Belarus has set an ambitious goal: in 2025, no less than 64 per cent of the total volume of generated municipal solid waste is reused, in 2030 — up to 79 per cent, and in 2035 — 90 per cent.

The indicator of the reuse of SMW is planned to be achieved through the extraction of all usable SMRs (up to 29% of the total volume of generated SMW) and through the introduction of new technologies (61% of the total volume- of generated SMW) such as composting of the organic part (23% of the total volume of generated SMW) and the use of the calorific fraction (38% of the total volume of generated SMW).

To achieve these indicators, it is planned to create 16 large interregional facilities for sorting and reusing SMW, including for production of alternative fuels from waste and biological treatment of the organic part of SMW.

Belarus is gradually introducing a system of separate collection and sorting of solid municipal waste, which will contribute to the maximum recycling of waste as a secondary material resource and ensure the implementation of the principle of zero disposal of solid municipal waste.

It is also planned to build modern landfills for the disposal of the non-

recyclable part of SMW in accordance with the requirements of environmental protection and with the phased closure and reclamation of existing landfills.

### **Green Economy.**

In December 2021, Belarus adopted the National Action Plan for the Development of the Green Economy for 2021-2025, the strategic goal of which is to develop an inclusive, smart, and digital green economy that promotes economic growth while preserving the natural capital and increasing employment through the creation of green jobs.

The development of the green economy in the Republic of Belarus is based on the following principles:

- the principle of sustainable development, which implies a focus on sustainable economic, social, and environmental development;

- the principle of inclusiveness, which implies expansion of the range of stakeholders and their involvement in the development of the green inclusive economy;

- the principle of intersectorality, which implies interaction among representatives of various sectors of the society in the decision-making process;

- the principle of innovation, which implies the use of the achievements of scientific and technological progress for the introduction of environmentally friendly technologies;

- the principle of scientific rigour, which implies the disclosure of cause-and-effect relationships between phenomena, processes, and events, as well as mandatory inclusion in the National Plan of only relevant and up-to-date information in line with the current level of development of science;

- the principle of ecological efficiency and sufficiency, which implies ensuring sustainable production and consumption, maximizing the beneficial properties of goods and services while minimizing the impact on the environment throughout the life cycle of products;

- the principle of resource conservation, which implies taking into account the need for resource conservation while making management decisions;

- the principle of managing waste as a resource, which implies the adoption of management decisions with due regard for the need to prevent (minimize) waste generation and create the conditions for its maximum recycling with the aim of replacing primary (natural) resources and developing industrial symbiosis;

- the principle of enhanced competitiveness and strengthening of the country's positions in world markets, taking into account global trends in green development;

- the principle of transparency, which implies the dissemination of information about the opportunities, processes, and results related to the implementation of the green economy concept;

- the principle of international cooperation and responsibility, which implies

the promotion of global policy coherence and fair international interaction, exchange of knowledge, experience, and technologies.

The set of developed principles confirms the close link between the concepts of the green economy and sustainable development. The mechanism of green economic growth, including its environmental, social, and economic components, is an effective practical tool to ensure the transition to sustainable development at the regional, national, and global levels by increasing resource and energy efficiency, reducing (preventing) waste generation and maximizing its reuse; developing ecosystem services and ensuring sustainable use of natural resources; introducing environmental innovations; creating new markets through stimulation of the demand for green technologies, goods and services; and creating new green jobs.

In the economic sphere, the introduction of the principles of the green economy will contribute to sustainable economic growth based on innovations, and an increase in competitiveness; in the social sphere it will allow to improve the quality of life, and in the environmental sphere it will help to reduce the burden on the environment and ensure more efficient use of the natural capital. The implementation of the National Plan will ensure green economic growth while preserving the natural capital and increasing employment, including through the creation of green jobs and, as a result, achievement of the sustainable development goals, as well as the harmonization of economic, environmental, and social interests of the Belarusian society.

### **SDG 13 “Climate Action”.**

In 2016, Belarus became a party to the Paris Agreement; the republic is implementing an action plan for the implementation of its provisions.

In 2021, the Belarusian side approved a new nationally determined contribution, according to which it is planned to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 35 per cent by 2030 compared to the 1990 level, including the land use, land-use change, and forestry sector and without additional funding. The goal will be achieved within the framework of the implementation of the Programme of Socio-economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025, and a number of state and sectoral programmes for this period.

*In 2019, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, excluding the land use, land-use change, and forestry sector, amounted to 61.02 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent, in 1990 - to 103.76 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent.*

At the same time, Belarus has sufficient potential for the development of renewable energy sources (RES) in the country. There has been a considerable increase in the use of such renewable energy sources as wind, hydro, and solar energy (a 15-fold increase in power generation compared to the level of 2010), and biogas (a 5-fold increase in consumption compared to the level of 2010).

In the period 2016-2021, 25 photovoltaic plants with a total installed electric capacity of more than 200 MW; 5 hydroelectric power plants with a capacity of more than 60 MW; 36 wind power plants with a capacity of about 60 MW; and 11 biogas complexes with a capacity of more than 12 MW were built in Belarus.

The development of nuclear energy is also intended to contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions: with the commissioning of two units of the Belarusian NPP, greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced by more than 7 million tons.

Belarus continues to provide ecosystem services, taking into consideration that a significant part of the territory is preserved in its natural state.

Belarus is among the world leaders in restoration of wetlands, which contributes to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

At the national level, strategic documents on climate action have been adopted and are being developed: the draft Strategy for Long-term Development with Low Greenhouse Gas Emissions until 2050 provides for measures in the areas of heat and electricity generation, improvement of energy efficiency in the industrial, transport, construction, housing and utility sectors.

Belarus is implementing national action plans for adaptation of agriculture and forestry to climate change until 2030; a National Action Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change, as well as strategies for adaptation of agriculture and forestry of the Republic of Belarus to climate change until 2050 are being drafted.

### **SDG 14 “Life below Water”.**

Belarus is located on the watershed of rivers belonging to the basins of two seas: the Baltic and the Black. While being a landlocked country, Belarus contributes to preserving marine ecosystems through the protection of transboundary rivers, thus protecting the waters of the Baltic and Black Seas. In the territory of the republic, there are 20,800 rivers with a total length of 90,600 km. The largest of them are the Dnieper, the Western Dvina and the Neman; the longest one is the Dnieper - 700 km.

As a result of the implementation of the state policy in the field of water use and protection, the general condition of the water bodies of the Dnieper, the Western Dvina, the Neman, and the Pripyat basins has improved (in particular, in terms of the content of biogenic elements); the condition of the water bodies of the Western Bug basin has stabilized.

Belarus has developed the principle of basin management of water resources, which implies the management of river basins and improvement of the ecological condition (status) of surface water bodies. As a result of this work, by 2025 the ecological status "good and above" should be assigned to 75% of water resources.

In particular, the implementation of river basin management plans for the Dnieper and the Western Bug involves measures aimed at maintaining "good" or "excellent" ecological condition (status) of water bodies and progressively reducing the negative impact on water bodies (2019-2025), as well improving the ecological condition (status) of surface water bodies (2026-2031). To date, work is underway in the following areas:

- construction, reconstruction, modernization, overhaul of wastewater disposal systems, including treatment facilities providing for the discharge of wastewater into the environment;

- elimination of sources of contamination of surface and underground waters with effluents of livestock farms and complexes (construction, reconstruction, and overhaul of facilities for collection, accumulation, and treatment of manure and manure-containing wastewater, embankment of manure storage sites);

- protection of groundwater from pollution, including work on the elimination of abandoned and no longer usable water intake structures intended for extraction of groundwater, implementation of measures aimed at decommissioning infiltration fields and other facilities for natural biological treatment.

## **SDG 15 “Life on Land”.**

### **Forestry.**

Belarus is implementing the State Programme "Belarusian Forests" for 2021-2025 and the Strategy for Adaptation of Forestry in Belarus to Climate Change until 2050.

As a result of the measures taken, Belarus is among the top ten most forested states in Europe according to a number of key indicators characterizing the forest fund (forest cover of the territory, forest area and growing stock per capita).

Since 2011, the Republic of Belarus has achieved positive trends with regard to the main indicators characterising the forest fund:

- the total land area of the forest fund has increased by 234,900 hectares or by 2.4 per cent and amounts to 9690,000 hectares;

- the forested area has increased and amounted to 8334,400 hectares; the forest cover of the territory of the republic has reached 40.1 per cent; the total standing stock has increased by 259.4 million cubic metres (13.9 per cent) and amounted to 1857.6 million cubic metres (including mature and old stock, which has increased by 187.8 million cubic metres (46.8 per cent) and amounted to 401.6 million cubic metres);

- the stock per hectare of forested land has increased by 24 cubic metres and amounted to 223 cubic metres;

- the average age of stock has increased by 4 years and is 56 years.

The improvement of the age structure of forests has allowed for the growth of the estimated cutting area. Since 2011, the share of mature forests, which are the main base for logging, has increased from 10.7 per cent to 17.6 per cent. The estimated cutting area of final cutting operations increases annually.

The planned indicators for forest sowing and planting are achieved in full. In the period 2011 -2021, artificial reforestation and afforestation were carried out on an area of 297,700 hectares, including 41,600 hectares in the reporting year.

The share of forest stock created annually with the use of pedigree seeds and plants in the total area of forest sowing and planting has been increased by 1.7 times. From 2011 to 2021, pedigree seeds and plants were used to establish forests on 140,900 hectares, which makes up 47.3 per cent of artificial reforestation and afforestation area.

To increase the forest cover of the territory of Belarus, afforestation works in areas of the forest fund that were previously not forested are being performed within the projected time frame. From 2011 to 2021, as part of afforestation, forest plantations were established on an area of 11,760 hectares, including 2,070 hectares in the reporting year.

In the Republic of Belarus, forest management works are performed



annually on an area of about 1 million hectares. Management of all forests is carried out within the framework of a 10-year cycle. Forest management without a forest management project is prohibited by law.

### **Biodiversity and landscape diversity.**

In the Republic of Belarus, work is underway to improve the regulatory framework aimed at the conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity.

Belarus has approved the National Action Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity based on the provisions of the 2022 Kunming Declaration.

Work is underway to prepare a draft law "On the Management of Genetic Resources" as part of the efforts to fulfil the obligations of the Republic of Belarus under the 2010 Nagoya Protocol.

In order to implement the provisions of the Cartagena Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity, certain provisions of the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On the Safety of Genetic Engineering Activities" of 2021 and the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Amendments to Laws on Environmental Protection and Management" have been adjusted. Changes have been made to the list of objects of state registration: the possibility to register not only breeds but also groups, lines or individual genetically engineered animals has been ensured by excluding from the definition the term "the use of genetically engineered organisms for economic purposes", as well as the term "breeds of genetically engineered animals" in the articles on state registration of genetically engineered organisms.

In 2020, in order to implement the norms of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the procedure and conditions for issuing CITES permits were defined at the governmental level.

Belarus has a regulatory system of specially protected natural territories, including those of a transboundary nature. In the context of the construction of protective barriers on the Belarusian-Polish border by Poland, part of which will affect the territory of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Belovezhskaya Pushcha", the issue arises of the preservation of this relict forest, its biological diversity, and the existing ecosystem.

### **Elimination of the consequences of the Chernobyl accident.**

As a result of the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, 23 per cent of the territory of Belarus was exposed to radioactive contamination: 3,678 settlements with a population of 2.2 million people were affected, 479 settlements ceased to exist; 330,000 people were displaced; about 340 industrial enterprises were in the contaminated area; 264,000 hectares of land were

excluded from agricultural turnover.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, five state programmes have been implemented in the country with a total funding of about \$20 billion. In March 2021, the Sixth State Programme for 2021-2025 was approved to ensure further elimination of the consequences of the Chernobyl accident.

Currently, 49 populated districts belong to the radioactive contamination zone, of which 21 districts are the most affected.

Targeted efforts are being made to rehabilitate agricultural land in the territory affected by the Chernobyl accident: almost 20,000 hectares have been reclaimed.

## **SDG 16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”.**

### **Combating violence.**

Belarus has taken measures to raise citizens' awareness of the capabilities of state bodies and public associations in addressing problems of domestic violence, as well as the effectiveness of preventive action against perpetrators of such violence. Since 2014, the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On the Basics of Crime Prevention Activities" has been in force; in 2022, the legislation regulating the prevention of domestic violence was improved.

The most effective measure to prevent serious and especially serious crimes belonging to the category of domestic violence is the initiation of preventive criminal cases; protective orders and preventive supervision have proven their effectiveness.

In 2021, more than 2,100 preventive criminal cases were initiated (in 2020 - 1,700 cases); in 2021, more than 53,200 citizens incurred administrative penalties for offences against a family member (in 2020 - 43,600 citizens).

In 2021, protective orders were issued against 8,200 citizens (in 2020 - 6,500 citizens), including 6,900 orders (in 2020 - 5,900 orders) to vacate shared living premises.

As of January 1, 2022, 8,300 citizens who had committed domestic violence were under preventive supervision.

The measures taken to a certain extent helped to deter offenses related to the category of domestic violence: according to the results of 2021, there was a decrease in the number of serious and especially serious crimes (-9.5 per cent; from 391 to 354), intentional infliction of grievous bodily harm on family members (-7.8 per cent; from 206 to 190), as well as persons who died as a result of domestic murders and intentional infliction of grievous bodily harm (-17.1 per cent; from 111 to 92).

One of the factors in the prevention and detection of crimes related to sexual violence against minors is the development and implementation of a mechanism for direct interaction with parents, guardians (trustees), teaching staff, and internal affairs officers.

In order to consolidate the efforts made by stakeholders in crime prevention to address this problem, action plans have been approved and are being implemented in the regions of Belarus.

To eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including human trafficking, and sexual and other forms of exploitation, an effective methodology for detecting crimes related to sexual violence and exploitation has been put into practice; organizational, analytical, practical and other measures are being actively implemented to more effectively combat crimes against sexual integrity or sexual freedom, as well as child pornography and child trafficking. Constant support is provided for the functioning of hotlines and the Rehabilitation Centre of the International

Organization for Migration, and citizens are informed about their activities; since 2007, the Department for Citizenship and Migration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs has been operating a hotline to ensure safe travel abroad; a free hotline for ensuring the protection of children from sexual assaults has been set up; printed and video materials dedicated to the issues of human trafficking, sexual abuse of children, and safe travel abroad (social videos, booklets, leaflets, brochures, etc.) are produced on a regular basis.

In November 2019, to attract public attention to the problem of sexual abuse of children, the website [kids.pomogut.by](http://kids.pomogut.by) on prevention of crimes against the sexual integrity of minors was launched; a number of social videos on the prevention of sexual violence against and exploitation of children have been prepared (the videos are available on the website of the International Organization for Migration, and at the respective youtube channel).

### **Combating human trafficking.**

In July 2021, the implementation of the international technical assistance project "Strengthening the National Mechanism for Referral of Victims of Human Trafficking in the Republic of Belarus" was completed.

The national mechanism for identification and referral of victims of human trafficking to rehabilitation has been improved: the changes are aimed at de-bureaucratisation and increasing the speed of procedures for identification and referral of victims of human trafficking, as well as citizens who may have suffered from human trafficking or related crimes, implementation of protection and rehabilitation measures, ensuring the possibility to suspend identification while preserving the right to assistance, and other innovations ensuring more effective protection of the rights and interests of victims of human trafficking.

The main provisions of the Programme to Combat Crime and Corruption for 2020 - 2022 are aimed at strengthening the protection of minor victims of human trafficking.

Belarus continues to make a significant contribution to international cooperation in combating human trafficking, including in the context of international migration.

In 2021, at the proposal of Belarus, the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its 30th session adopted by consensus the resolution "Implementation of the UN Global Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking".

At the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, the resolution "Improving the Coordination of Efforts against Trafficking in Persons" traditionally sponsored by Belarus was also adopted by consensus.

As part of the implementation of the UN General Assembly resolutions adopted earlier at the initiative of Belarus to improve coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons, a regular review of the UN Global Action Plan to

Combat Human Trafficking was conducted in 2021. As a follow-up to the review, the 2021 Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking was agreed.

**Combating the illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition.**

Targeted efforts are made in Belarus to counter the illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition.

In 2021, 921 unregistered firearms were seized (in 2020 – 673 firearms), and 410 firearms were voluntarily handed over to the internal affairs bodies (in 2020 – 305 firearms).

## **SDG 17 “Partnership for the Goals”.**

### **Partnerships to achieve the SDGs.**

To establish a sustainable partnership, Belarus has created an architecture for achieving the SDGs, which includes representatives of government agencies, the parliament, the business community, and the civil society; interaction with UN agencies and other international and regional partners is maintained.

In its interaction with other states in the international arena, Belarus is guided by the principle of partnership relations. Belarus supports the establishment of global thematic partnerships in international organisations and actively participates in this process.

In 2011, the President of the Republic of Belarus came up with the initiative to establish cooperation between the Collective Security Treaty Organisation and the UN in the field of peacekeeping, which provides for the participation of the units of the CSTO peacekeeping forces in peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the UN. In 2018, a mechanism was launched to formalise such interaction.

At the initiative of Belarus, in 2018, within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, the institutions of a partner of the CSTO partner and an observer at the Organisation were established, allowing interested states and international organisations to join the practical activities of the CSTO, including exercises of collective security forces.

In 2019, at a high-level international conference on combating terrorism with the help of innovative approaches, the President of the Republic of Belarus came up with the initiative to form a "digital good-neighbourliness belt" aimed at improving the effective fight against terrorist threats in cyberspace.

The efforts of Belarus led to the launch of a global UN partnership to combat human trafficking.

### **Public and private partnership.**

Taking into account the important role of public-private partnership (PPP) in achieving the SDGs and improving the well-being of people in Belarus, the principle of public-private partnership has been laid down in the new edition of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, and significant work has been performed to promote and encourage partnership between the public and private sectors.

To date, the legislative framework of the PPP mechanism has been formed, and international practices have been studied. At the same time, adjustment of the legislation of the Republic of Belarus in this area continues taking into account international and domestic practices. This year, it is planned to introduce changes aimed at simplifying competitive procedures and encouraging private initiative.

In order to develop human resources and improve the level of competence

of public administration bodies, and organisations involved in the process of preparing PPP projects, a number of educational seminars and events have been held, including practical training for employees of state and local government bodies as part of the course "Preparation and Implementation of Public-private Partnership Projects: Theory and Practice" (within the framework of a joint Programme with the EU and the World Bank).

At the same time, the implementation of a new mechanism in the economy of the country was not an easy task. Presently, there are no concluded agreements on PPP in the Republic of Belarus.

At the moment, the largest PPP project is the project for the reconstruction and maintenance of the facility "M-10 Highway: the border of the Russian Federation (Selishche)- Gomel - Kobrin, 109.9 km - 195.15 km ", within the framework of which a tender is being held to choose a private partner. The project has generated considerable interest. Representatives of the countries of the European Union, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Turkey, the Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation have taken part in the tender.

### **Purchasing power.**

In 2021, in the Republic of Belarus, GDP at purchasing power parity amounted to \$207.4 billion, which represents an increase by 1.2 times compared to 2015.

During this period, GDP per capita at purchasing power parity increased from \$18,000 to \$22,200.

### **Export.**

Since 2015, the volume of exports of goods and services according to the balance of payments methodology has increased by 49.9 per cent, amounting to \$49.3 billion in 2021. At the same time, exports of goods increased by 49.1 per cent, exports of services by 53 per cent.

The following factors contributed to stability and an increase in export volumes in 2015-2021:

- development of trade and economic cooperation within the framework of the Union State and the EEU, elimination of trade barriers, accelerated implementation of the integration potential of the association;

- expansion of trade and investment relations with the People's Republic of China;

- intensification of trade and economic cooperation with promising and fast growing economies of Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America;

- improvement of the tools of credit, financial, and insurance support for exporters, establishment of a specialized export support agency.

**Improvement of the investment climate.**

Investments are one of the driving forces of increased labour productivity, job creation, and sustainable economic growth.

There are various preferential investment regimes in Belarus, under which investors are provided with tax, customs and other preferences in order for them to set up and operate a successful business.

Investors can conclude investment agreements with the Republic of Belarus, set up export-oriented production in free economic zones, and implement projects in the Hi-Tech Park and the Belarusian and Chinese Industrial Park "Great Stone" on favourable terms.

In order to improve the investment climate and eliminate potential barriers to investment, systematic work is performed to adjust the legislation.

In 2021, legal acts were developed to consolidate advanced legal norms providing for enhanced protection of investor property rights, the transfer of the powers of the head of state to change the boundaries of a special economic zone to the government, the introduction of an additional type of pension insurance, the creation of a unified list of administrative procedures for business, the improvement of the national reinsurance system, the optimization of approaches to the implementation of administrative procedures, and the improvement of the legal regime of the Great Stone Park.



## **Conclusion.**

The analysis of the Second Voluntary National review shows a steady positive trend in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by Belarus in recent years.

The achievement of the indicators noted above is due to two main factors.

**Firstly**, Belarus approached the adoption of the 2030 Agenda having tangible results in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, most of which were achieved ahead of schedule.

As the 2030 Agenda is focused on the development of economic, social, and environmental components, Belarus a priori was taking action to improve the quality of life of the population and address environmental issues. To this end, instead of considering the Sustainable Development Goals as an international political project, Belarus sees them as a complementary global strategic guidance until 2030 to improve the level of socio-economic development of the country, while responsibly approaching the implementation of international commitments and integrating the 17 SDGs into a comprehensive network of national strategic and programme documents.

**Secondly**, in Belarus, under the auspices of the National Coordinator, there is a well-developed architecture for interaction between state bodies, the parliament, the business community, and the academia with the involvement of non-governmental organizations and a pool of youth ambassadors. The UN agencies accredited in Belarus are invited to participate in assessment of the progress towards the implementation of the SDGs.

The established multicomponent mechanism ensures the application of a comprehensive approach when considering the achievements in the implementation of the SDGs, identifying weaknesses and planning further work.

It should be noted that, in general, Belarus has been systematically and successfully implementing its intentions to fulfil the 2030 Agenda on time. The effective achievement of the SDGs depends on each specific country, however today the main principle of the 2030 Agenda “to leave no one behind” has been violated in relation to Belarus.

Since the end of 2020, Belarus has been implementing the 2030 Agenda in the face of unprecedented illegal unilateral economic sanctions (UCMs), which are actively applied by Western countries. Not only do these actions hinder the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by Belarus but they also run counter to the UN Charter and the core UN conventions in the field of human rights. The unilateral economic sanctions maintained against Belarus offset the results achieved in the implementation of the SDGs.

Notwithstanding the complexity of the situation, Belarus continues to adhere to the principle according to which the 2030 Agenda should not be politicised, and further work to achieve the SDGs will be based on this premise.

This year and in the near future, due attention will be paid to the

development of the regions of Belarus, taking into account their peculiarities and specifics, as well as to further implementation of numerous programmes in -all spheres of life until 2025.

In general, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires both coordinated actions of the stakeholders within the country and external assistance and expertise. In this regard, SDG 17 related to partnerships remains an important topic for Belarus and is identified as one of the priorities in the work of the 2022 Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Even before the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Belarus was actively promoting the ideas of partnerships at various levels, noting that they represented the best tool for the implementation of the key international instrument that would be adopted in future.

In this context, working together with the national architecture for achieving the SDGs, the Government of Belarus intends to continue active interaction with stakeholders at the national level, including the UN Country Team and other agencies of the UN system, the civil society, and the private sector to ensure economic, educational, social, demographic, environmental, information and communication sustainability of the country.

It is within the framework of partnership with all stakeholders that Belarus will continue to develop international cooperation in the field of sustainable development, while remaining committed to the principle "to leave no one behind".