



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council Nr 907 Vienna, 29 March 2012

#### EU Statement on Belarus

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The European Union remains deeply concerned about the continued lack of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law in Belarus, and the on-going harassment of members of the opposition, civil society and independent media. We call on the Belarusian authorities to stop the repressive actions immediately.

We recall that the Foreign Affairs Council on 23 March 2012 strengthened the restrictive measures against those responsible for serious violations of human rights or the repression of civil society and democratic opposition in Belarus. The Council also decided to designate further businessmen and companies benefitting from or supporting the regime and will agree further such designations at upcoming Council meetings if all Belarusian political prisoners are not released.

The EU continues to be concerned about the reports of mistreatment and inhumane prison conditions of political prisoners in Belarus. In this context, we note with great concern the information about the dramatically deteriorating health condition of Mr Siarhei Kavalenka, who has been on a hunger strike since December last year in protest against his imprisonment.

The EU calls on the Belarusian authorities to ensure that all individuals in detention or incarceration are treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person and that their rights are fully respected, including the rights to get necessary medical care, unhindered access to their lawyers and maintain contact with their families.

The EU reiterates its call on the Belarusian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release and rehabilitate all political prisoners.

Furthermore, the EU is concerned about the recent travel restrictions faced by members of the political opposition, independent journalists and representatives of the civil society. Since the beginning of March there have been a growing number of cases in which Belarusian citizens were not allowed to leave Belarus despite having all necessary travel documents. We call on the authorities of Belarus to respect their OSCE commitments regarding freedom of movement and the right for everyone to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country. The EU reiterates its firm commitment to strengthening its engagement with the Belarusian people and civil society and to supporting the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people.

Recalling the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 23 March 2012, the EU calls on the Belarusian authorities to follow up on their previously announced intention to initiate a national dialogue with civil society and the opposition to pave the way for the holding of parliamentary elections in 2012 in line with international norms and standards. The EU calls on the Belarusian authorities to cooperate within the OSCE in view of a re-opening of the OSCE field presence in Belarus, and to adhere to and implement OSCE commitments across all three dimensions, in particular in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The EU reiterates its commitment to the policy of critical engagement, including through dialogue and the Eastern Partnership, and recalls that the development of bilateral relations is conditional on progress towards respect by Belarus for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The EU remains willing to assist Belarus to meet its obligations in this regard.

The Acceding Country Croatia\*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland+ and Serbia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the European Free Trade Association countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

\* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.