



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council N°1090 Vienna, 18 February 2016

AOB - EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on Belarus

The European Union would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on Belarus of 15 February 2016.

The Council remains concerned with the situation of human rights in Belarus and recalls that EU-Belarus relations should be based on common values, especially respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Council conclusions make ample reference to these issues that remain of utmost importance, including in relation to death penalty, fundamental freedoms and the human rights dialogue. We have circulated these conclusions to all of you.

The Council also acknowledged the steps taken by Belarus over the last two years that have contributed to improving EU-Belarus relations, such as the proactive participation of Belarus in the Eastern Partnership.

The Council reached a decision not to extend restrictive measures for 170 individuals and three companies whose listings are currently suspended. At the same time, it agreed that the arms embargo on Belarus and restrictive measures related to four individuals listed in connection with the unresolved disappearances of two opposition politicians, one businessman and one journalist, will be extended for a period of twelve months.

The Council urged the Belarusian authorities to swiftly take forward the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR's final report on the conduct of the 11 October 2015 Presidential elections, including on the legal and procedural framework. The Council also welcomed Belarus' growing openness to dialogue and cooperation with the OSCE/ODIHR. The Council recalls the importance it attached to

improvements in this area and to respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Belarus.

The Council recognises that there is an opportunity for EU-Belarus relations to develop on a more positive agenda and that progress in a variety of fields can better be achieved through enhanced channels of communication. In that regard, we believe that the OSCE provides a good platform for enhanced dialogue with Belarus across the three dimensions.

The Council reaffirmed that good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are important elements for enhancing EU-Belarus cooperation, including in the field of nuclear safety.

Tangible steps by Belarus to respect universal fundamental freedoms, rule of law and human rights will remain key for the shaping of the EU's future policy towards Belarus.