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EU Statement on Belarus

Last week the EU voiced its concern over the persecution and harassment of civil society in Belarus. We are therefore very disappointed to learn about the steps taken on 29 October by Belarusian authorities against the activists of an NGO, the Partnership Initiative. Mikalai Astreyka, Enira Bronitskaya, Aliaxander Bodarau and Svitlana Konnava were arrested in Minsk and subsequently put into jail or fined while in the process of establishing an association of independent election observers.

These measures appear to be in open contradiction with OSCE norms and principles to which Belarus has committed itself along with 54 other participating States. The EU underlines that freedom of association and assembly, the respect for the Copenhagen Commitments and a constructive relationship between governments and non-governmental organisations are important benchmarks of the electoral process leading to next year's presidential elections.

The EU stands ready to engage further with Belarus on these issues.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia¹, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro align themselves with this declaration.

¹ Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process