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EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council 895
Vienna, 22 December 2011**

EU statement on Belarus

The European Union is deeply concerned about the way the Belarusian authorities reacted to the attempts to organize peaceful demonstrations in Minsk and other locations across Belarus on the occasion of the anniversary of the violent suppression of protests in Belarus following the presidential elections on 19 December 2010. The purpose of these demonstrations was to commemorate victims of repression and express solidarity with political prisoners.

The EU is alarmed by information that numerous political activists were arrested in main Belarusian cities, including Minsk, Grodno and Vitebsk, to prevent them from participating in these demonstrations. We are equally concerned by reports about the disproportionate use of coercive measures by the Belarusian authorities against the participants in Minsk, dozens of arrests that occurred during these events, as well as the mistreatment of the representatives of the media covering them.

Furthermore, the EU is deeply concerned by reports that after the three Ukrainian FEMEN activists organized a protest near the KGB headquarters in Minsk on December 19, they were abducted, beaten and subjected to threats

and degrading treatment. We call on the Belarusian authorities to investigate this case and bring perpetrators to justice.

The EU reiterates its call on the Belarusian authorities to observe their OSCE and other international commitments related to freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of association.

The EU also reiterates its call on Belarus to immediately release and rehabilitate all political prisoners, and to stop harassment of members of the opposition, independent media and civil society.

The acceding country CROATIA*, the candidate countries THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO and ICELAND**, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and SERBIA, 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 and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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