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EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 828
Vienna, 9 September 2010**

EU statement on the death of a journalist in Belarus

The European Union thanks the Belarusian delegation for its information and its clarifications on the case of the death of Mr Aleh Byabenin. The European Union is deeply saddened by the unexpected death of this leading opposition journalist, the founder and director of website Charter97 – one of the few non-governmental sources of information in Belarus. We are concerned about the circumstances of the death of Mr Byabenin, whose body was reportedly found on the 3rd of September 2010 in his summer cottage outside Minsk. The EU joins others in expressing its condolences to Mr Byabenin's family and friends.

The EU thanks the OSCE Office in Minsk for its timely spot report on the matter and joins the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatović, in her call for an independent and transparent investigation into this death. A thorough investigation clarifying the circumstances and causes of Mr Byabenin's death is crucial to remove all questions raised by this incident. It is essential for ensuring a free and open media in Belarus, particularly in view of the forthcoming Presidential elections.

The EU will continue to follow the matter and would appreciate to be kept informed about progress in the investigation.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA* and ICELAND, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area NORWAY, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.