



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Special Permanent Council Nr 845 Vienna, 23 December 2010

EU statement on the presidential elections and the post-electoral situation in Belarus

The European Union has taken good note of the preliminary findings of the OSCE/ODIHR -led International Election Observation Mission to the Belarusian presidential elections. They noted that Belarus still has a considerable way to go in meeting its OSCE commitments, although some specific improvements were made. Unfortunately, the trend set by the relative progress during the campaigning period was not followed by a transparent and fair polling process.

The European Union urges Belarus to engage fully in dialogue with the OSCE/ODIHR on reform of the electoral code and how to best implement OSCE/ODIHR recommendations in this respect with a view to future elections.

It is especially regrettable that election night was marred by violence, which we strongly condemn. In particular, the beating and detention of several opposition leaders, including presidential candidates, is unacceptable. The European Union deeply regrets that several hundred protesters as well as many journalists have been sentenced to prison and could face further prosecution. The European Union calls upon the authorities in Belarus to release without delay all detained journalists, opposition leaders, human rights defenders and other peaceful demonstrators and further calls for a genuine dialogue between the authorities and the opposition.

We support the statement of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media condemning the arrests and assaults on journalists. We call upon the authorities in Belarus to ensure unhindered work of independent media.

The European Union also wishes to express its concern about reported irregularities in the court proceedings being conducted against Belarusian citizens charged with participating in an unsanctioned demonstration and about the conditions in which they are being detained.

The European Union takes this opportunity to remind the government of Belarus of its OSCE human dimension commitments, particularly on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, which it reaffirmed at Head of State level at the OSCE Summit in Astana just a few weeks ago.

We recall our policy of critical engagement, through which the EU has offered a deepening relationship with Belarus. This is conditional on respect for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The Union remains committed to strengthening its engagement with the Belarusian people and civil society.

Thank you, Mr Chairman,

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, ICELAND** and MONTENEGRO*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and SERBIA, 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 the EFTA and the European Economic Area.