



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1345 Vienna, 18 November 2021

EU statement on the response by Belarus to the Vienna Mechanism

1. The European Union takes note that Belarus engaged under the OSCE Vienna Mechanism and responded in a timely manner, but we regret that the content of the response does not indicate a real change in the approach of the Belarusian authorities.
2. Since the OSCE Vienna Mechanism was invoked on 4 November, the human rights situation in Belarus has further deteriorated. According to the human rights organization "Viasna", there are at least 862 political prisoners in Belarus, while intimidation and new detentions continue on a daily basis. On 12 November, we marked the 1st anniversary of the tragic death of Mr Raman Bandarenka, a Belarusian citizen beaten to death by individuals associated with the enforcement personnel. The perpetrators still have not been brought to justice.
3. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the instrumentalization of migrants and refugees carried out by the Belarus regime for political purposes, as well as of the numerous provocations against the border guards and deliberate attacks against the border infrastructure of the EU Member States. International organisations need to be provided with immediate and unhindered access to deliver humanitarian assistance.
4. The EU stands in solidarity with Latvia, Lithuania and Poland which are most affected by this hybrid attack and will continue assisting those most directly impacted. On 15 November, the EU Foreign Affairs Council amended its sanctions regime in view of the situation at the EU's border with Belarus, as a

direct response to the orchestrated instrumentalization of human beings for political purposes. The EU's listing criteria on which specific designations can be based were broadened, and the EU will now be able to target individuals and entities involved in and contributing to activities by the Lukashenko regime that facilitate the illegal crossing of the external borders of the European Union.

5. We reiterate that the only way to end the political crisis in Belarus is through an inclusive national dialogue and political process resulting in free and fair elections under the observation of OSCE/ODIHR. We call on Belarus to take up the offer by the previous and current OSCE CiOs to facilitate this dialogue.
6. The EU remains united in further supporting the people of Belarus, including by providing emergency assistance for the victims of oppression and for independent media and humanitarian assistance to the civilian population. The EU will also continue to support international initiatives to hold perpetrators to account, including through the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Accountability Platform for Belarus.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.