



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

PC.DEL/238/08
3 April 2008

ENGLISH only

Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**Permanent Council No. 707
3 April 2008**

Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Belarus

I would like to draw the attention of the participating States to the following Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union, issued on the 28th of March 2008:

“The Presidency, on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, expresses strong disappointment at the arrest of a large number of participants, especially young people, and condemns the use of violence in dispersing peaceful demonstrators on the occasion of the Freedom Day in Minsk and other Belarusian cities on the 25 March. The European Union, recalling that the main demonstration in Minsk had been authorized by the Minsk City Council and proceeded peacefully, calls upon Belarus to release those arrested without delay and to refrain from further prosecuting them.

The European Union has repeatedly indicated its willingness to develop constructive relations with Belarus. It has taken positive note of the recent release of all but one internationally recognised political prisoner in Belarus. The Union reiterates its expectation that Mr Aliaksandr Kazulin, the last remaining political prisoner, will be released unconditionally and without delay. This would enable the European Union to start engaging progressively with Belarus.

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In order to improve relations with the European Union, the Belarusian authorities should refrain from further arrests and stop persecuting the representatives of Belarusian civil society. In this context, the events of the 25 March and the nationwide round-up of local journalists connected to foreign media, which started on 27 March, are particularly worrisome, as is the recent treatment of the US Ambassador to Minsk and many of her staff who have been obliged to leave Belarus at very short notice. The European Union hopes that Belarus will now take prompt and concrete steps to enable a resumption of positive dynamics in relations between the European Union and Belarus.

The Candidate Countries Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine align themselves with this declaration.

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

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