



## EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 873  
Vienna, 7 July 2011**

### **EU statement on Belarus**

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The European Union continues to be deeply concerned about the ongoing and deepening repression of the political opposition, civil society and independent media in Belarus.

The EU condemns in the strongest possible terms the violent and disproportionate response of the Belarusian authorities to peaceful protests on the Independence Day in Belarus, celebrated on 3 July, in particular the arrest of several hundred people, solely on the basis of their participation in these protests. The EU notes with concern reports that many of them were mistreated by the police and detained on fabricated charges. Recent similar peaceful protests organised in Belarus on 22 and 29 of June and yesterday, 6 July, were also forcefully dispersed by the police with numerous detentions. The EU supports the persons arrested during those protests and calls for them to be released immediately and unconditionally and all charges against them to be discontinued.

The EU is also concerned about the detention by the Belarusian authorities of Stanislau Shushkevich, the first head of the independent Belarusian State, who was returning from a meeting of the Community of Democracies in Vilnius.

Furthermore, the EU shares the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Ms Dunja Mijatović's critical assessment of the media situation in Belarus, expressed in her recent letter to President Alexandr Lukashenko. We fully support the Representative's call on the Belarusian President to put an end to the unprecedented repression of media that existed before, but was stepped up after the 19 December 2010 presidential election. The EU also condemns the violent police actions against journalists, including on 29 June, 3 July and 6 July, the detention and sentencing of several journalists in connection with these demonstrations and the recent conviction on political grounds of journalist Andrzej Poczobut. Moreover, we call on the Belarusian authorities to co-operate fully with the Representative, including meeting her request to visit Belarus without delay.

The EU calls on Belarus to observe the OSCE commitments and international standards related to human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and media, assembly and association. The EU also reiterates its calls for the immediate release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners.

Referring to its statement of 16 June 2011 on the OSCE rapporteur's report on Belarus, the EU reiterates its commitment to the policy of critical engagement, including through dialogue and the Eastern Partnership, and recalls that the development of bilateral relations is conditional on progress towards respect by Belarus for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

The candidate countries CROATIA\*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ICELAND\*\*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate 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 the EFTA and the European Economic Area.