



## EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Special Permanent Council Nr 862  
Vienna, 19 May 2011**

### **EU statement on Belarus**

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The European Union would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the sentencing of Belarusian Presidential candidate Sannikaw, published on 14 May and distributed as an OSCE Document under the reference number SEC.DEL/183/11. In this statement, she strongly condemns the sentencing on political grounds on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May of former presidential candidate Andrey Sannikaw to 5 years of imprisonment. The EU is also deeply concerned about the harsh sentences handed out over the past days against a number of representatives of civil society, the political opposition and independent media.

The EU shares the view of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, that the sentencing on the 16 May of Belarusian journalist Irina Khalip to a two-year suspended jail term, is another attempt to silence differing and critical voices in Belarus. The EU also shares the RFoM's repeated concerns over the continuous deterioration of media freedom in Belarus. The information that another Belarusian journalist, Andrzej Poczobut, is awaiting trial charged with defamation of President Aleksandr Lukashenko, and that the Information Ministry recently filed lawsuits to close two of Belarus' largest independent newspapers, *Nasha Niva* and *Narodnaya Volya* can only further deepen those concerns.

Most regrettably, the significant deterioration in the respect for human rights and democratic principles in Belarus since the violations of electoral standards in presidential elections on 19 December 2010 continues unabated. There have been politically motivated harassments, arrests, detentions and trials of representatives of the democratic opposition, civil society and independent media. The EU is also seriously concerned about reports of alleged torture and other ill treatment.

The EU reiterates its call upon the Belarusian authorities to end at once the ongoing crackdown on the political opposition, civil society and independent media, to release all the political prisoners and to discontinue all politically motivated trials, including against the other ex-Presidential candidates which are currently being tried. The EU reiterates its readiness to consider further targeted restrictive measures in all areas of co-operation.

The candidate countries TURKEY, 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 country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as SAN MARINO 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.