

Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**Permanent Council No. 603**  
**30 March 2006**

**EU Statement on Belarus**

1. The EU would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the European Council's Declaration on Belarus issued on Friday, 24 March, which has been distributed to all delegations. In its declaration the European Council condemned the actions of Belarusian authorities against peaceful demonstrators exercising their legitimate right of free assembly to protest at the conduct of Presidential elections in Belarus. Following these fundamentally flawed elections the European Council has decided to take restrictive measures against those responsible for the violation of international electoral standards in Belarus, including President Lukashenko.
2. The EU fully shares the concerns expressed over the continuous detentions and post-election developments in Belarus by OSCE Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht. The EU is appalled by the use of violence against demonstrators by the Belarusian authorities. The EU is seriously concerned about the massive arbitrary arrests of the demonstrators and members of opposition, including the presidential candidate Alexander Kozulin, and, it demands they be immediately released. The EU calls upon the Belarusian authorities to refrain from cracking down on any further peaceful protest and to live up to their OSCE commitments and to allow people in Belarus to freely exercise their right of assembly and freedom of expression.
3. In this context, we also share the concerns expressed by the Representative of the Freedom of the Media that the detentions of Belarusian and foreign journalists constitute an infringement of OSCE commitments to safeguard free reporting. We welcome Mr Haraszi's

decision to continue monitoring violations of freedom of reporting in Belarus.

4. In addition, the pressure that has been exercised on several EU Embassies in Minsk is unacceptable. The EU calls upon the Belarusian authorities to fully respect the provisions of the Vienna Conventions (1961 and 1963) on Diplomatic and Consular Relations.
5. At the same time the European Council has welcomed the message of hope brought by Belarus' democratic opposition and civil society. Their brave efforts to advance the cause of democracy in exceptionally difficult circumstances deserve our full recognition and support. The European Union reiterates its commitment to engage with Belarusian society by further strengthening its support for civil society and democratisation; it will also intensify people to people contacts and enhance access to independent sources of information.
6. The EU is particularly disappointed that the actions of the Belarusian authorities prevent the Belarusian people from enjoying the benefits of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The Union is interested in developing closer relations with the Belarusian people and therefore regrets the policy of self-isolation of the Belarus authorities.

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

---

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