



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1438 Vienna, 7 September 2023

EU Statement on the anniversary of the fraudulent presidential elections in Belarus

1. Three years have passed since the fraudulent presidential elections in Belarus. The Belarusian peoples' will to live in a free and democratic country was met with brutal repression, and the violence continues.
2. Those demanding new free and fair elections are labelled "extremists" and, according to the amendments to the Criminal Code, may be charged even with the death penalty. The Polish and other communities in Belarus, as well as independent political parties, associations or trade unions, have also become a target of this policy.
3. The EU calls on the Belarusian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release over 1,500 political prisoners. The EU condemns the verdicts of 3 March in the cases of Ales Bialiatski, Vyasna's chairperson and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Andrzej Poczobut, an independent journalist who was recently sentenced to 8 years in prison under false allegations, as well as other verdicts in the cases of human rights defenders tried in absentia and sentenced on politically motivated charges.
4. The determination of Belarusian people who, at great personal risk, continue to stand up for democracy remains a source of great hope. The EU is providing support to victims of repression, human rights defenders, civil society organisations, independent media and journalists, students and businesses in exile, as well as to initiatives aimed at safeguarding the Belarusian identity, culture, and language.
5. The Lukashenka regime has also become a threat to regional and international security, through actions such as the forced landing of a civilian airplane in May 2021 and the still ongoing instrumentalisation of migration for its political purposes on the EU's eastern borders.

6. In February 2022, the Lukashenka regime became an accomplice in Russia's illegal and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine. Belarus allowed Russia to use its territory to launch missile attacks against Ukraine, including against civilian targets. It provides Russia with military equipment, including tanks, ammunition and fuel. The EU condemns the continued military support for Russia's war of aggression provided by Belarus. Belarus must stop allowing Russian armed forces to use its territory, including for the deployment of nuclear weapons.
7. This complicity has allowed the illegal deportation of Ukrainian children by Russia to the Belarusian territory. On 26 May 2023, Russia and Belarus took a further escalatory step by signing an agreement to allow the deployment of Russian nuclear warheads on Belarusian territory. The EU is concerned about the recent deployment in Belarus of the Wagner mercenaries, the destabilising effects in the region and the risk they represent for Belarus' sovereignty.
8. The EU has adopted sanctions in response to the repression against all independent voices and against persons belonging to national minorities, the breaches of international law and the support to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine by the Lukashenka regime. The latest package of sanctions addresses human rights violations and the constantly worsening internal repression, and sends a signal that the EU continues to be fully engaged in support to human rights and democracy. It also addresses the risk of sanctions circumvention.
9. We call on the authorities of Belarus to engage in a genuine and inclusive dialogue with all elements of society leading to free and fair elections. Once Belarus embarks on a democratic transition, the EU is committed to help Belarus stabilise its economy and reform its institutions. Our aim is to help build resilience and more democratic reforms, to create new jobs and improve people's living standards, including through a Comprehensive Plan of Economic Support of up to EUR 3 billion to a democratic Belarus. The EU will stand with Belarusians for as long as it takes on their path to an independent, democratic and prosperous country that is part of a peaceful Europe.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area.

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