



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council 891  
Vienna, 24 November 2011**

### **EU statement on Belarus**

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The European Union strongly condemns the conviction of Mr Ales Byalyatski, an internationally renowned Belarusian human rights defender, founder and head of the Centre for Human Rights 'Viasna', who was sentenced to 4 and a half years of imprisonment.

The EU considers the prosecution of Mr Byalyatski to be politically motivated. His trial and conviction fits into a broader picture of widespread repression of, and increasing restrictions on, the activities of civil society, human rights defenders and the political opposition in Belarus. Such actions of the authorities of Belarus, which have escalated dramatically since the presidential elections in December 2010, are not in line with OSCE commitments and international human rights standards.

The EU reiterates its call on Belarus to release and rehabilitate immediately all political prisoners and to stop harassment of members of civil society, including human right defenders.

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, 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.