

Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**Permanent Council No. 607**  
**4 May 2006**

**EU Statement on Belarus**

1. Mr. Chairman, on 10 April, 2006, the European Council urged the Belarusian authorities not to penalise or discriminate against those exercising their right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, including the leaders of the opposition parties. The EU therefore learned with great dismay about the arrest on 27 April of the leading opposition figure Mr. Alyaksandr Milinkevich and other opposition activists because of an alleged “active participation” in an unauthorised event. This is a clear sign of the Belarusian authorities’ continued contempt for basic democratic values and principles.
2. The EU condemns the arrests and fully shares the deep concern expressed by the OSCE Chairman in Office about the imprisonment of Mr. Milinkevich, which the EU believes to be politically motivated. The EU Presidency and several other member states have already issued statements on the events on 26 and 27 April. The EU demands the immediate release of Mr. Milinkevich and Mr. Alyaksandr Kozulin, as well as all other political detainees.
3. The EU once again calls on the Belarusian authorities to comply with their OSCE commitments and to fully respect the Human Rights and fundamental freedoms of their citizens.

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.

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