



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Special Permanent Council Nr 852 Vienna, 3 March 2011

EU statement on the situation in Belarus

The EU continues to follow closely the post election situation in Belarus, which remains a matter of serious concern. We reiterate our calls on the Belarusian authorities for the immediate release of those detained on political grounds following the elections on 19 December, and their rehabilitation, and to end the repressions against those exercising their right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, including the leaders of the opposition parties. The EU remains gravely concerned about the situation of all those detained on political grounds, especially in view of reported allegations of torture, physical abuse, intimidation and court irregularities. The EU deeply regrets the conviction of Mr Yevgeniy Parfyankow on 17 February to 4 years, of Dmitry Novik, Alexander Molchanov, and Alexander Otroshchenkov on 2 March to 3.5, 3 and 4 years imprisonment respectively for participation in the 19 December demonstrations. We urge the Belarusian authorities to investigate all accusations of torture, physical coercion and intimidation, and ensure a fair and public trial of all those facing charges in relation to the mentioned demonstrations. We fully support ODIHR's intention to send observers to monitor trials and call on the Belarusian authorities to facilitate their work, in a timely manner and without pre-conditions, in line with the commitments undertaken in the Copenhagen Document and reaffirmed by all participating States at the Astana Summit.

The European Union has noted with concern ODIHR's final report on the December 2010 presidential elections in Belarus. The report concludes that Belarus has a considerable way to go in meeting its OSCE commitments for democratic elections. In particular, it highlights that the elections were marked by a lack of independence and impartiality of the election administration, an uneven playing field and a restrictive media environment, as well as a lack of transparency at key stages of the electoral process, notably the vote count. The European Union calls on Belarus to engage in a constructive dialogue with ODIHR on reforming the electoral code and implementing ODIHR's other recommendations contained in the final report.

The EU also remains concerned about media freedom in Belarus. We reiterate our call upon the authorities to stop the harassment and to ensure unhindered work of independent media. In this regard, we also call upon the authorities to cooperate with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatović, who continues to closely monitor the media environment in the country and has offered her expertise to the Belarusian authorities, and encourage them to facilitate her visit to Belarus.

The EU regrets the decision not to extend the mandate of the OSCE Office in Minsk and commends the Lithuanian Chairmanship's efforts to ensure a continued and meaningful OSCE presence in Belarus. We once again urge the Belarusian authorities to engage constructively in the dialogue with the Chairmanship on this matter.

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, the European Free Trade Association countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members 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.