



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 859
Vienna, 14 April 2011**

EU statement on the freedom of the media in Belarus

The European Union regrets that the respect for freedom of the media in Belarus continues to deteriorate and is deeply concerned by recent detentions of journalists in the country. In this context, we would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the statement by the spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the crackdown on independent media in Belarus issued on 10 April 2011, which specifically refers to the detention of Mr Andrzej Poczobut, a correspondent for the Polish newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza.

We share the concerns voiced by the Representative on Freedom of the Media in her press statement on 5 April about the criminal investigations against Irina Khalip and Natalia Radina, as well as about the rejected appeal of broadcaster Avtoradio aimed at reinstating its broadcasting licence, and the failure of Narodnaya Volya newspaper to annul a warning by the Ministry of Information.

The EU strongly condemns all harassment, arrests and intimidation of representatives of independent media by the authorities in Belarus. We agree with the Representative that these actions are a flagrant violation of OSCE commitments undertaken by Belarus.

The EU calls upon the Belarusian authorities to end the prosecution of independent journalists for slander or other politically-motivated charges. The EU

also urges the Belarusian authorities to co-operate fully with the Representative, including meeting her request to visit Belarus without delay.

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 country NORWAY, member 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.