



## EUROPEAN UNION

**Permanent Council Nr 884  
Vienna, 20 October 2011**

### **EU statement on Belarus**

---

The European Union is deeply concerned about numerous amendments recently approved by the Belarusian Parliament, including to the Law on Public Associations, the Law on Political Parties, and the Law on Mass Actions, as well as to the Criminal and the Administrative Codes.

These amendments, *inter alia*, imply an additional tightening of the restrictions on the activities of civil society and political opposition in Belarus, already operating under difficult circumstances and subjected to restrictive registration requirements. The new legislation, if adopted, would make it a criminal offence to receive support from abroad and introduce regulations restricting further the rights of the citizens of Belarus in the area of freedom of expression and assembly.

We note with concern that these laws were approved in secrecy and without public debate.

Furthermore, the EU is deeply concerned about the ongoing discussions on a draft law On State Security Establishments, which would increase the powers and prerogatives of the KGB by expanding the right of security officers to use physical force, firearms and enter premises without a warrant. The amendments

fail to balance these increased powers by reference to the concept of the proportional use of force.

The EU believes that the entry into force of these draft laws would represent yet another serious step backwards in Belarus' respect for human rights and the rule of law and would go against our common OSCE commitments. We call on Belarus to refrain from enacting these laws.

Finally, the EU reiterates its call for the immediate release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners.

The candidate countries TURKEY, 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.