



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1006
Vienna, 3 July 2014**

**EU Statement on the Release of Belarusian Human Rights
Defender Ales Bialiatski**

The European Union would like to draw the attention of Permanent Council to the statement on 21 June 2014 by the Spokesperson of the EU High Representative concerning the release of Belarusian human rights defender Ales Bialiatski.

We welcome the release of Belarusian human rights defender Ales Bialiatski. After almost three years of imprisonment on politically motivated grounds, he can now finally re-join his family and friends.

This is an important step by the Belarusian authorities and should be followed without delay by the release of all the remaining political prisoners and the reinstatement of their full civil and political rights. This could contribute to improving relations between the European Union and Belarus.

We call on the government of Belarus to implement in full its OSCE commitments to protect human rights defenders. We encourage them and all participating States to draw on the recently published ODIHR Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, as they seek to do this.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.