



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1066 Vienna, 3 September 2015

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#### **EU Statement on the release of political prisoners in Belarus**

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The European Union welcomes the recent release of political prisoners in Belarus. The freeing of Mykalai Statkevich, a former presidential candidate, as well as Mykalai Dziadok, Ihar Alinevich, Jury Rubtsov, Euheny Vaskovich and Artyom Prakapenka is a long-awaited step forward. We call on the authorities of Belarus to remove all restrictions on the enjoyment of full civil and political rights of the released.

The European Union regards the release of political prisoners as an important progress in the efforts towards the improvement of relations between the EU and Belarus. Following this development a next important step would be Presidential elections on 11 October in line with OSCE commitments. This would pave the way for further improving our relations.

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

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro 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.