



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1343 Vienna, 4 November 2021

#### **EU statement on the Current Issue raised by the UK on “One year anniversary of the Moscow Mechanism report in relation to serious human rights violations in Belarus, and invoking of the Vienna Mechanism”**

1. The European Union remains gravely concerned about the continuous serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Belarus.
2. In the run-up to and ever since last year's 9 August fraudulent Presidential elections, the people of Belarus have bravely stood up for the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. They have peacefully protested in the face of the Lukashenko regime's massive and systematic human rights abuses, as documented in the report under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism by Professor Wolfgang Benedek, presented to the Permanent Council one year ago.
3. Regretfully, the Moscow Mechanism report's recommendations have remained unaddressed, the Lukashenko regime has continued an orchestrated repression and intimidation campaign against civil society, human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists and other media actors, trade unions, as well as systematic destruction of non-governmental organisations and independent media, with the ultimate aim of silencing all remaining independent voices and suppressing civic space in Belarus. Arbitrary and unfounded detentions, unjust persecutions, including denial of the right to a fair trial, and hundreds of documented cases of torture continue to take place in an environment of impunity. The EU deplores the decision by the Investigative Committee of Belarus, as announced on 26 August, not to open criminal investigations into some 680 complaints of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including sexual and gender-based violence. This decision must

be reversed. No one responsible for these crimes should enjoy impunity. According to a human rights organization “Viasna”, there are now at least 827 political prisoners in Belarus. We call for their immediate and unconditional release and rehabilitation.

4. The regime in Minsk has further challenged international norms with the forced and unlawful landing of Ryanair Flight 4978 in Minsk on 23 May and the instrumentalization of vulnerable migrants for political purposes. The observed more than 50-fold increase of irregular crossings from Belarus into the EU is not a reflection of the inability of the Belarus administration to comply with their obligations in combatting illegal migration and human trafficking. There are no objective reasons for such a sharp increase in illegal crossings on the route in question. We condemn the instrumentalization of migrants for political purposes, as well as numerous provocations against the border guards and border infrastructure of the EU Member States, and urge the authorities in Belarus to stop this practice. We stand in solidarity with Latvia, Lithuania and Poland and call on Belarus to respect and implement its international commitments, including those undertaken within the OSCE. Illegal migration must not be used as a political bargaining chip.
5. Together with like-minded partners, the EU has been vocal and united in calling on the Lukashenko regime to end its repressive practices. We call on Belarus to respond to the questions under the OSCE Vienna Mechanism, invoked today by 35 participating States, in a timely manner.
6. In line with its gradual approach, the EU stands ready to consider further measures in light of the regime’s blatant disregard of international commitments. A reversal of EU sanctions will only be possible once the authorities in Belarus fully adhere to the principles of democracy and the rule of law, respect human rights obligations and cease all repression. The only way to end the political crisis is through an inclusive national dialogue and serious, credible and inclusive political process resulting in free and fair elections under the observation of OSCE/ODIHR.
7. Once Belarus embarks on a democratic transition, the EU is committed to help Belarus stabilise its economy, reform its institutions in order to make them resilient and more democratic, create new jobs and improve people’s living

standards, including through a Comprehensive Plan of Economic Support of up to EUR 3 billion to a democratic Belarus, the outline of which was published by the European Commission on 28 May 2021.

8. The EU remains united in further supporting the people of Belarus, including by providing emergency assistance for the victims of oppression and for independent media and humanitarian assistance to the civilian population. The EU will also continue to support international initiatives to hold perpetrators to account, including through the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Accountability Platform for Belarus.
9. The EU will continue to support a democratic, independent, sovereign, prosperous and stable Belarus. The voices and the will of the people of Belarus will not be silenced.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.