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Delegation**

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United Kingdom Presidency of the Council of the European Union

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**Permanent Council No. 584  
15 December 2005**

**EU Statement on Belarus**

Mr. Chairman,

On December 2, the EU Presidency issued a declaration in which it raised its concern about the decision of the Belarusian National Assembly to approve amendments to the Belarusian Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code aimed at toughening punishments for “activities directed against people and public security”.

The EU fully shares the opinion of the UN Special Rapporteur, Adrian Severin, that the new provisions have the potential to severely undermine freedoms of assembly, association and expression in Belarus. As stated in our declaration, the provisions of the bill seem to go entirely against many of Belarus’ human rights commitments and this legislation appears to be a clear attempt to intimidate Belarusians and to stifle free speech as Belarus approaches presidential elections.

The EU very much regrets that despite its urgent call to the Belarusian National Assembly to reconsider the decision and to reject the undemocratic draft legislation, the Belarusian authorities continued to further its adoption. The EU therefore calls once again on the Belarusian authorities to honour their OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and to take concrete steps to demonstrate their willingness to respect democratic values and the rule of law. The EU will continue to follow closely development in Belarus and stands ready to take appropriate measures against individuals responsible for not upholding international standards.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia<sup>1</sup>, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine align themselves with this declaration.

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<sup>1</sup> Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process