



## German Presidency of the Council of the European Union

### **659 Meeting of the Permanent Council**

**29 March 2007**

## Statement of the European Union on Freedom of Assembly

In connection with recent demonstrations in the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, the European Union would like to express its concern and to reiterate its position on freedom of assembly.

The right to freedom of peaceful assembly is a cornerstone of pluralistic democracy. It provides an important safeguard of freedom of expression and the right to political participation. Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association". It has inspired similar expressions in declarations and national legislation worldwide including the European Union's own Charter of Fundamental Rights. The freedom of assembly and association have also formed an essential part of the OSCE acquis since the 1975 Helsinki Final Act.

We call upon all OSCE participating States to respect their commitments, to allow their citizens to exercise their right to assemble peacefully and express their views without harassment and interference.

We are looking forward to fruitful discussions on this issue during the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Assembly, Association and Expression, which is taking place here in Vienna today and tomorrow.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

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\* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.