



PC.DEL/11/11  
13 January 2011

ENGLISH only

## EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Special Permanent Council Nr 846  
Vienna, 13 January 2011**

### **EU statement on OSCE related developments in Belarus**

---

Recalling the joint statement by the spokespersons of Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative, and Hillary Rodham Clinton, U.S. Secretary of State, issued on January 4, 2011, the European Union regrets the decision by the government of Belarus not to extend the mandate of the OSCE Office in Minsk. The EU considers this decision to be a serious step backwards in the cooperation of Belarus with the OSCE and especially disappointing in light of the reaffirmation of commitments made by Heads of State and Government of the OSCE participating States at the Astana Summit. The Office has been carrying out valuable work in Belarus, in particular in promoting institution building and the rule of law and supporting the development of civil society. The EU firmly believes that the Office's mandate is not completed and calls on the Belarusian authorities to reconsider their position on this matter.

The EU sincerely hopes that consultations started by the new Lithuanian Chairmanship will produce a solution that would enable the OSCE to continue its work in Belarus, including monitoring and contact to civil society. We call on the Belarusian authorities to engage constructively in dialogue on this issue, so that the Office's mandate can be extended without further delay.

The EU continues to be seriously concerned about recent developments in Belarus.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of the continuing detention on political grounds of a number of ex-presidential candidates, their supporters, as well as other peaceful demonstrators, and call for their immediate release. The EU further calls on the Belarusian authorities to observe legal standards and to ensure full respect for the human rights of the detainees, in particular to allow for unhindered access to the political prisoners and others detained on political grounds.

The elections and their aftermath underlined the continuing need for Belarus to improve its implementation of OSCE commitments, in particular those in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as those directly related to elections. In the 1990 Copenhagen Document, participating States declared that the will of the people, freely and fairly expressed through periodic and genuine elections, is the basis of the authority and legitimacy of all government. In this regard, we repeat our call on Belarus to deepen its engagement with ODIHR on electoral issues.

The EU is also seriously concerned about the reported continuing harassment of the independent media in Belarus, including the arrests of journalists Irina Khalip and Natalya Radina, the interrogation of Andrzej Poczobut, the intimidation of TV Belsat reporters, as well as raids by Belarusian security forces on the offices of the Nasha Niva and Borisovskiye Novosti newspapers, and the European Radio for Belarus. The EU supports the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Ms Dunja Mijatović in her call for an end to the hostile actions against independent media in Belarus.

The EU expresses its solidarity with the Belarusian people and remains committed to support the development of civil society in Belarus. We reiterate our readiness to assist the authorities of Belarus in meeting OSCE commitments.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA\*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, ICELAND and MONTENEGRO, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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

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