



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1283 Vienna, 1 October 2020**

#### **Statement on recent developments in Belarus**

The European Union continues to be deeply concerned about recent developments in Belarus. For weeks, people in Belarus have taken to the streets to protest against the fraudulent Presidential elections and the wave of repression that followed. Last Sunday, once again massive demonstrations took place across Belarus. Regrettably, as we have seen repeatedly, peaceful demands for a new election and national dialogue were met with brutal violence and intimidation, including use of water cannons, tear gas and stun grenades. As a result, on that day alone, at least 380 people were detained solely because of their participation in peaceful protests.

This unacceptable practice has become a “new reality” in Belarus. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the continuing detention on political grounds of members of the political opposition, including those on the Coordination Council, and other political activists as well as peaceful demonstrators, and call for their immediate and unconditional release. We also continue condemning the persistent attacks against, and unlawful detentions of, journalists and other media actors, as well as deliberate shut downs of the internet and attacks against Belarusian media outlets. We reiterate our urgent call on the Belarusian authorities to immediately refrain from any further repression and violence directed against the Belarusian people as well as to fully comply with their OSCE commitments and international standards related to human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and media, assembly and association.

The brutal repressive actions by the Belarusian authorities and their failure to uphold their human rights commitments require permanent scrutiny by the

international community. Comprehensive monitoring of the human rights situation in Belarus is therefore of utmost importance to prevent the further escalation of violence. In this regard, we welcome the successful adoption of the resolution on the situation of human rights in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and its aftermath following the urgent debate of the UN Human Rights Council and call on Belarus to implement it in full and without delay.

Moreover, the Moscow Mechanism is in this context a relevant OSCE tool that provides an unbiased and factual basis for further inclusive dialogue and action. We recall that the Moscow Mechanism is an instrument established by consensus and in good faith by all participating States to help us implement our shared commitments in the human dimension and we urge the Belarusian authorities to revise their decision not to engage, and in particular to allow the appointed expert full access to all actors on Belarusian territory.

The EU reiterates that the 9 August Belarus Presidential elections were neither free nor fair. The European Union does not recognise their falsified results. On this basis, the so-called 'inauguration' of 23 September 2020 and the new mandate claimed by Aleksandr Lukashenko lack any democratic legitimacy. This 'inauguration' directly contradicts the will of large parts of the Belarusian population, as expressed in numerous, peaceful protests since the elections, and serves to only further deepen the political crisis in Belarus.

We are impressed and moved by the courage of the Belarusian people who continue to demonstrate peacefully for democracy and for their fundamental rights despite the brutal repression of the Belarusian authorities. We stand in solidarity with them and fully support their democratic right to freely elect their President through new inclusive, transparent and credible elections with international observation, in particular by ODIHR.

The EU remains convinced that an inclusive national dialogue and a positive response to the demands of the Belarusian people for new democratic elections are the only way out of the serious political crisis in Belarus that respects the wishes of the Belarusian people. In this context, we welcome the online meeting of the Bureau of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the leader of the Belarusian

opposition Ms Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya, to which the head of Belarusian delegation to the OSCE PA, Mr Andrei Savinykh, also took part.

In light of the current situation, the EU is reviewing its relations with Belarus.

The EU appreciates and supports the ongoing efforts undertaken by the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship and recalls the offer by the current and the incoming CiOs to pay a joint visit to Belarus. We reiterate our call on the Belarusian authorities to engage constructively within our Organisation and to accept this offer without further delay.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

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