



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1329 Vienna, 12 August 2021

#### **EU on the anniversary of the 9 August 2020 fraudulent presidential elections in Belarus in response to the CI raised by the US**

**FINAL (642 words)**

1. On 9 August 2020, the people of Belarus saw their hopes to elect a legitimate leader of the country brutally dashed.
2. Since then, the people of Belarus have continuously and bravely stood up for the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. They have called for new, democratic elections. They have peacefully protested in the face of the Lukashenko regime's disregard of the rule of law and Belarus' international commitments and human rights obligations as documented in the latest expert report under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism by Prof. Wolfgang Benedek.
3. One year later, their call remains unanswered. The Lukashenko regime has cracked down on the Belarusian society, persistently deepening the rift with the Belarusian people. Representatives of the opposition and pro-democratic forces together with thousands of citizens from all sections of society have either died in unclear circumstances, been detained or forced to leave the country and live in exile. We are deeply worried by the tragic death in Kiev of Mr. Vitaly Shishov, the head of the NGO 'Belarusian House in Ukraine', a helper of fellow Belarusians fleeing repression to seek refuge in Ukraine.

4. The Lukashenko regime has launched a well-orchestrated repression and intimidation campaign against civil society, human rights defenders and media workers, as well as the 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. The Polish community has also become a target of this policy. 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.
5. With the forced and unlawful landing of Ryanair Flight 4978 in Minsk on 23 May and the instrumentalisation of vulnerable migrants for political purposes, the regime has further challenged international norms. We stand in solidarity with Lithuania and demand the Minsk authorities stop facilitating illegal migration to the EU. We call on Belarus to respect and implement its international commitments and obligations, including those undertaken within the OSCE.
6. Together with like-minded partners, the EU has been vocal and united in calling on the Lukashenko regime to end its repressive practices. 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. The only way to end the political crisis is through an inclusive national dialogue.
7. 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 regime should release and rehabilitate unconditionally the more than 600 political prisoners, and engage in a serious, credible and inclusive political process resulting in free and fair elections under the observation of OSCE/ODIHR.
8. 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 on 28 May by the European Commission.

9. 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 all perpetrators to account, including through the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Accountability Platform for Belarus.
10. 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 REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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