



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council 1387 Vienna, 1 September 2022

#### **EU Statement on the Second anniversary of the fraudulent presidential elections in Belarus**

1. Last month we marked the second anniversary of the 9 August 2020 fraudulent presidential elections in Belarus that have stripped Belarusians of the opportunity to freely choose their own future. We reiterate our steadfast support for their democratic aspirations and efforts to uphold the respect for fundamental human rights. We also reiterate that Aleksandr Lukashenka lacks any democratic legitimacy.
2. Two years ago, the regime in Minsk launched a massive crackdown on the people of Belarus for peacefully seeking democratic governance. Since then, the regime has orchestrated a brutal repression that has continuously worsened. Political prisoners – human rights defenders, journalists, trade unionists, media actors, lawyers and ordinary citizens who voice any criticism of the system – who already number over 1300 are regularly subjected to inhuman treatment. Many Belarusians, including representatives of the democratic opposition, were forced to leave the country to avoid unjustified persecution. The regime has labelled many democracy activists as “terrorists”, targeting them with disinformation and intimidation, as well as threatening them with the death penalty. It has also intensified its persecution against the Polish community. Lately, the regime has targeted schools of national minorities in Belarus.
3. In contrast, none of the perpetrators of violence against the civilian population have been held to account. We will continue to support the international accountability efforts for Belarus, with a view to gathering and preserving evidence of human rights violations. We will not forget the victims of the Lukashenka regime, and its past and present crimes.

4. In February this year, as Russia launched its unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, the Lukashenka regime became an accomplice, against the will of the vast majority of the Belarusian people, by permitting Russia to use Belarusian territory to invade Ukraine, as a launchpad for its missiles and by granting Moscow full political and logistical support. The regime now also persecutes Belarusians for standing up against the war.
5. Together with our like-minded partners, we have imposed sanctions in response to the ongoing repression, the breaches of international law and aviation rules, as also confirmed by the ICAO Council, the instrumentalisation of migration and the regime's complicity in Russia's war against Ukraine.
6. We call on the authorities in Belarus to fully adhere to the principles of democracy and the rule of law, respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and act in compliance with international law and Belarus' own commitments, including those undertaken within OSCE. We call for the immediate and unconditional release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners, and for the cessation of repression. The authorities in Belarus must engage in a genuine and inclusive dialogue with all elements of society, including with the Belarusian democratic forces, leading to free and fair elections under international observation and in accordance with international standards. We also call on Belarus to stop its collaboration in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.
7. Our determination to support the people of Belarus remains unchanged. Since August 2020, the EU has committed about EUR 65 million in support to the people of Belarus - the victims of repression, civil society, independent media, women, youth and students, small businesses, health and culture. We stand ready to mobilise our EUR 3 billion comprehensive plan of economic support once a democratic transition will have taken place in Belarus.
8. For the European Union, Belarus and its courageous people are an important European neighbour. We are firmly committed to continue using our available instruments, including further sanctions and enhanced support, to support the democratic rights of the Belarusian people. We will continue to stand by the people of Belarus and support a democratic, independent, sovereign, prosperous and stable Belarus.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE and REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate Country BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\*, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

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