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du Conseil de l'Union européenne*

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auprès de l'OSCE

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EU STATEMENT ON BELARUS

Mr. Chairman,

In a statement to the Permanent Council on 19 May, the European Union expressed its concern over the situation of the civil society, harassment of the independent media and intimidation of the political opposition and NGOs in Belarus. Regrettably, we continue to receive information that the pressure against the opposition and independent media from the side of the Belarusian authorities does not diminish. The latest disturbing examples are the reopening of the criminal proceedings against the deputy head of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Mr. Harry Pahanyajla, and the sentencing of Mr. Statkevitch and Mr. Severinets to restricted freedom for organizing protest actions after the referendum. The EU was also disappointed to learn of the recent seizure of copies of the independent weekly newspaper Den by Belarusian authorities.

The European Union also continues to monitor closely the proceedings against Mr. Skrebets and expects his case to be handled in a transparent and fair manner.

The EU has already voiced its concerns regarding certain requirements of the Belarusian Housing Code. It is inevitable that such requirements will seriously hamper and in many cases make impossible the activities of many parties and organizations.

As on many previous occasions, the EU calls on the Belarusian authorities to refrain from their negative approach towards the civil society and to fulfil their commitments regarding the democratic standards, the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania and the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia¹ align themselves with this statement.

¹Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process