



S. PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF PORTUGAL  
TO THE OSCE R.

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Portugal 2007- Presidency of the European Union

## Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**685<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Council**  
**1<sup>st</sup> November 2007**

### Statement of the European Union on Demonstrations in Belarus

The rights to freedom of expression and assembly belong to the core fundamental human and civil rights to which both the OSCE and the European Union are committed. Unfortunately, the free exercise of these fundamental rights is not yet guaranteed in all OSCE participating states.

The EU welcomes that the European March for Freedom could take place on 14 October 2007, and notes that, despite repressive measures against some of the organizers of this event, several thousand citizens could urge their Government to accept the offer of intensified cooperation made by the European Union in November 2006 and to take the necessary measures to this end. These include upholding fundamental democratic rights for the citizens of Belarus.

The EU hopes that the Social March planned for 4 November 2007 can go ahead peacefully and calls on the Government to refrain from interfering in its preparation.

The EU remains concerned that the Belarusian authorities arrested a number of political activists in the run-up to the European March for Freedom. The EU therefore calls upon the Government of Belarus to fully guarantee fundamental human and civil rights and to release all political prisoners, including the former presidential candidate Alexander Kozulin.

The European Union reiterates that it stands ready to renew its relationship with Belarus, as soon as the Belarusian government demonstrates its respect for democratic values and for the fundamental rights of the Belarusian people.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, align themselves with this statement.

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