



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1273 Vienna, 2 July 2020

#### **EU Statement on recent developments in Belarus in the context of the upcoming presidential elections**

In the context of the upcoming presidential elections in Belarus on 9 August, the European Union urges the Belarusian authorities to ensure a meaningful, free, fair and competitive political contest, in an inclusive and transparent manner, as well as to ensure that fundamental freedoms are respected and each candidate and voter can exercise their civil and political rights.

The Belarusian authorities must respect fundamental freedoms and human rights, in line with international obligations and OSCE commitments. They must refrain from any restriction of the rights of potential candidates and their arbitrary persecution, avoid any detentions of peaceful protesters, bloggers and journalists, and immediately release all those arbitrarily detained, including potential presidential candidates and members of their teams. Reported cases of ill-treatment of persons detained for their involvement in peaceful protests are also extremely worrying. As stated by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, journalists play a crucial role in covering events of public interest and authorities have to ensure that they are able to perform their work.

In line with the OSCE commitments, the EU expects Belarus to officially invite ODIHR as soon as possible to observe the upcoming presidential elections. Safe, peaceful, free and fair elections will foster democratic development in Belarus, reinforce its sovereignty and independence, and pave the way for greater cooperation with the EU and economic prosperity for the Belarusian people.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA

and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

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