



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 30 August 2005
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**Declaration from the Presidency on behalf of the European
Union on Restrictions on technical assistance to Belarus**

The European Union reaffirms its determination to support the needs of the population and democratisation in Belarus. It is the firm belief of the European Union that technical assistance to Belarus is of mutual benefit. Our goal is to help to develop civil society and independent media, strengthen the social and health sectors, improve the rule of law and the human rights situation, and develop small and medium enterprises. This assistance also aims to help the Belarusian government fulfil its international commitments, including its commitments in the framework of OSCE.

P R E S S

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The Belarusian government has agreed together with the EU on several programmes, e.g. TACIS and CORE. The EU is concerned that the restrictions introduced by President Lukashenko's decree on foreign aid (issued on 17. August) may seriously hamper the implementation of a wide range of mutually beneficial programmes and activities. The restrictions may lead to increased self-isolation of Belarus and adversely affect the population.

The European Union calls on Belarus to seriously reconsider the implementation of the decree, particularly in the light of its negative impact on the people of Belarus.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia *, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine aligns itself with this declaration.

* Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.