



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



## **Conclusions on Belarus**

*3041st FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
Council meeting  
Luxembourg, 25 October 2010*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council reiterates the importance of the EU's critical engagement policy towards Belarus and notes the continuation of high-level EU–Belarus political dialogue, the intensified technical cooperation and participation of Belarus in the Eastern Partnership, as ways of building mutual understanding and creating opportunities to address issues of concern. Recognising the importance of enhanced people-to-people contacts and recalling the Council Conclusions of 17 November 2009, the Council looks forward to receiving Commission proposals for the negotiating directives for visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Belarus.
2. The Council reaffirms its readiness to deepen its relations with Belarus depending on developments in Belarus towards democracy, human rights and the rule of law as well as its readiness to assist the country in attaining these objectives. Subject to progress in Belarus in these areas, it stands ready to take steps towards upgrading contractual relations with Belarus. The Council will continue its discussions on a joint interim plan to set the priorities for reforms, inspired by the Action Plans developed in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, to be implemented with Belarus. The EU could consider providing macro-financial assistance to Belarus, should the necessary preconditions be met, including the conclusion of a new program with the IMF.

# **P R E S S**

3. Nevertheless, the Council remains concerned over the democracy and human rights situation in Belarus. It deeply regrets the lack of progress in the areas expressed in its previous conclusions, including the need for further reforms of the Electoral Code, the freedom of expression and of the media, the freedom of assembly and association. The Council looks forward to further rounds of Human Rights dialogue. Recalling the European Union's firm opposition to the death penalty, the Council deplores the execution of two Belarusian citizens carried out in March 2010, regrets the recent death sentences in Belarus and continues to urge Belarus to introduce a moratorium on the use of death penalty with a view to its abolition.
4. In the light of this situation, the Council is not able to lift the restrictive measures in place against certain officials of Belarus and therefore decides to extend them until 31 October 2011. However, in order to encourage progress in the areas identified by the EU, the Council decides at the same time to extend the suspension of the application of the travel restrictions until the same date. At the end of that period, the Council will review the restrictive measures in the light of the situation in Belarus. The Council may decide to reapply or lift travel restrictions at any time, in light of actions by the Belarusian authorities in the sphere of democracy and human rights.
5. The EU will continue to provide support to Belarus' civil society in order to promote the development of a pluralistic and democratic environment in Belarus.
6. The Council takes note of the announcement that presidential elections in Belarus will take place on 19 December 2010. It calls on the Belarusian authorities to ensure that the elections are conducted in line with international norms and standards for democratic elections and Belarus' commitments in the OSCE and the UN. The Council welcomes the decision by the Belarusian authorities to invite an OSCE/ODIHR-led international election observation mission and invites the Belarusian authorities to fully cooperate with the OSCE-ODIHR. It also urges the responsible Belarusian authorities to fully implement the recommendations repeatedly made by the OSCE/ODIHR. The EU will closely monitor the developments and assess the situation after the elections. Clear and visible progress in the conduct of the elections would give new impetus to the European Union's engagement policy towards Belarus."

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