



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council 1389 Vienna, 15 September 2022

EU Statement on the sentencing of political prisoners in Belarus

1. On 6 September, the Minsk City Court, in a trial behind closed doors, sentenced a number of political prisoners to long prison terms totalling 94 years. Among those sentenced, there was the volunteer network coordinator of the Belarusian Human Rights Center *Viasna*, Ms Marfa Rabkova, as well as *Viasna*'s volunteer Mr Andrei Chapiuk, receiving 15 and 6 years in prison respectively.
2. According to *Viasna*, these individuals were arbitrarily convicted for exercising their right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression and association, while Ms M. Rabkova and Mr A. Chapiuk were also convicted for non-violent activities aimed at promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms.
3. The EU echoes ODIHR's deep concern about the violations of the right to a fair trial, including closed court proceedings, as well as the unjustified and excessive sentences handed down to human rights defenders, which are having a chilling effect on all those active in combating human rights violations and upholding fundamental freedoms in the country. The EU urges the Belarusian authorities to accept the offer ODIHR has made on a number of occasions to undertake fair trial monitoring in Belarus.
4. The EU reiterates its call on Minsk to immediately and unconditionally release and rehabilitate all those unlawfully detained, to stop violating human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Belarusian people, and to engage in a genuine and inclusive dialogue with the democratic forces and civil society to find a way out of the current crisis and to enable a peaceful political transition to a democratic society.
5. We also strongly deplore the forceful arrest and detention of Ms Evelina Schulz, Chargée d'Affaires a.i. of the EU Delegation to Belarus, after exiting the court building where the aforementioned political prisoners were sentenced. It is a flagrant and

unacceptable violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, guaranteeing the personal inviolability of diplomatic agents and carrying an obligation of the receiving State to treat the diplomatic agent with due respect as well as to take all appropriate steps to prevent any attack on his or her person, freedom or dignity. The Belarusian authorities must ensure that no similar incidents take place in the future.

6. Recalling the 2nd anniversary of the invocation of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism with regard to *Alleged Human Rights Violations related to the Presidential Elections of 9 August 2020 in Belarus*, we call on the authorities in Minsk to implement all recommendations of the Moscow Mechanism report, and to fully adhere to the principles of democracy and the rule of law, respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and act in compliance with international law and Belarus' own commitments, among others those undertaken within the OSCE, including by stopping its collaboration in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE and REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate Country BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

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