



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1248 Vienna, 21 November 2019

EU Statement on the early parliamentary elections in the Republic of Belarus

The early parliamentary elections in the Republic of Belarus took place in an overall calm atmosphere. Nevertheless, it was a lost opportunity to conduct elections fully in line with international standards.

We thank the OSCE/ODIHR International Election Observation Mission for providing us with preliminary findings on the elections. The preliminary Assessment states that there was an overall disregard for fundamental freedoms of assembly, association and expression. A limited amount of campaigning took place, within a restrictive environment that, overall, did not provide for a meaningful or competitive political contest. The restrictive registration process inhibited the participation of opposition in the elections. There were significant procedural shortcomings during the vote counting, as well as overall lack of transparency and general disbelief in the impartiality of the election administration.

A number of key OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission recommendations remain unaddressed. The legal framework in Belarus does not adequately guarantee the conduct of elections in line with OSCE commitments and other international standards and obligations. In view of the presidential elections of 2020, it is crucial the Belarusian authorities resume work on comprehensive electoral reform without delay. This will also be a key element for achieving the full potential of EU-Belarus relations, building on the positive cooperation of the last three years.

The European Union is committed to supporting a stable, democratic, sovereign and prosperous future of the country, for the benefit of the people of Belarus, and will continue its work with this objective firmly in mind.

Herewith we would also like to reiterate our ongoing support for ODIHR's election observation activities, which are based on a globally recognized methodology and the principles of independence, impartiality and professionalism.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

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