

Resolution on the situation in Belarus after the presidential elections of 19 March 2006

2006/2546(RSP) - 10/04/2006

The Council adopted the conclusions deploring the fact that the Presidential elections of 19 March were not held in a free and fair manner, and condemns the violence used by the Belarusian authorities against demonstrators and the ensuing arrests of demonstrators and members of the opposition. The Council condemns the treatment of all the political detainees and demands their immediate release. It calls on the Belarusian authorities to respect freedom of expression and assembly in compliance with commitments undertaken by Belarus in the framework of the OSCE and international human rights law. The Council equally condemns the actions taken by the Belarusian authorities against citizens of EU member states, in particular arrests, beatings and humiliating treatment in detention. The Belarusian authorities are urged not to penalise or discriminate against those exercising their right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, including the leaders of the opposition parties.

In view of the recent events, the Council has decided to adopt restrictive measures against President Lukashenko, the Belarusian leadership and officials responsible for the violations of international electoral standards, in particular those of the OSCE, and international human rights law, as well as for the crackdown on civil society and democratic opposition. The 31 individuals listed in annex will be subjected to a visa ban and possible further targeted measures. Such measures will not be directed against the Belarusian population. The Council will keep the measures to be adopted and the list of persons targeted open and under constant review. The measures should be reviewed in light of the speedy release and rehabilitation of all political detainees, and in the light of reforms made to the Electoral Code to bring it in line with OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections as recommended by the OSCE/ODIHR, the conduct of future elections, and concrete actions by the authorities to respect democratic values, the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression and of the media, and the freedom of assembly and political association.

The Council reiterates its commitment to engage with Belarusian society by further strengthening its support for civil society and democratisation; it will also intensify and facilitate people-to-people contacts and enhance access to independent sources of information.

Lastly, the EU remains open to developing bilateral relations with Belarus, including in the context of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and the European Neighbourhood Policy, provided the Belarusian authorities prove a sincere willingness to respect human rights, the rule of law and democratic values and initiate democratic reforms.