



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



**2706th EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting
Brussels, 30 January 2006**

Council conclusions on Belarus

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Recalling its previous conclusions on Belarus, in particular those of 7 November 2005, the Council reiterates its deep concern at the deteriorating situation in respect of democracy, human rights and political freedoms in Belarus. The Council once again calls on the Belarusian authorities to ensure that the Presidential elections on 19 March are conducted in a free and fair manner in accordance with international standards and in line with Belarus' commitments in the OSCE and the UN.
2. In this context, the Council welcomes the invitation by the Belarusian authorities to the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission and notes the willingness of Member States to make timely and adequate contribution to such a mission. In that respect, the Council urges the responsible Belarusian authorities:
 - to allow the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission to operate unimpeded in Belarus;
 - to ensure that all eligible candidates are allowed to register for the elections, to campaign freely and to enjoy equal access to state-controlled media;
 - to allow domestic and international media to report freely on the electoral process;
 - to fully implement recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR report on the 17 October 2004 parliamentary elections in time for the Presidential elections of 2006.

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3. The Council is continuing to closely monitor the situation in Belarus. The Council restates its readiness to take further appropriate restrictive measures against the responsible individuals in the event of failure to uphold international standards in the electoral process, in particular those of the OSCE.
 4. The Council reiterates its support for initiatives aimed at supporting democratisation and civil society in Belarus and encourages the intensification and facilitation of contacts between the people of the EU and Belarus. The Council recalls that the EU wishes to have closer and better relations with Belarus - including within the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and the European Neighbourhood Policy - once the Belarusian authorities clearly demonstrate their willingness to respect democratic values, human rights and the rule of law."
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