



General Assembly

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Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Letter dated 10 May 2011 from the Permanent Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council

On 22 February 2011, the Head of the Delegation of the European Union and the Permanent Representative of Hungary personally delivered the attached letter,* signed by a group of concerned countries, to the Permanent Representative of Belarus, inviting the delegation of Belarus to participate, in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in an interactive informal briefing on the human rights situation in Belarus. Our aim with this initiative was to improve our understanding of the human rights situation in Belarus and to share perspectives and key concerns in a spirit of dialogue, with a view to promoting positive measures for improvement. We regret, however, that this attempt at constructive engagement has not received any response from the delegation of Belarus, particularly in the light of the ongoing concerns about the human rights situation in that country.

In the interest of transparency, we feel it is important to bring the above-mentioned letter to your attention and to that of the Members and observers of the Human Rights Council. As such, we would kindly request you, Mr. President, to circulate the present letter and the annex thereto as a document of the seventeenth session of the Council.

(*signed*) Ambassador Mariangela Zappia
Permanent Representative of the
European Union Delegation to the
United Nations Office in Geneva

(*signed*) Ambassador András Dékány
Permanent Representative of Hungary
to the United Nations Office in Geneva

* Reproduced in the annex, as received and in the language of submission only.

Annex

Excellency,

Geneva, 18 February, 2011

We are writing to you, Excellency, to express our serious concerns regarding several reports of human rights violations that have followed the presidential elections in Belarus in December, 2010. Similar concerns have been expressed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and a number of other international actors.

We are particularly concerned about reports on the arrests of presidential candidates, activists, journalists and civil society representatives, as well as the ensuing detention and harassment of the opposition, independent media and civil society on political grounds. We also remain concerned by reports of the continued persecution and discrimination against those exercising their right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, including opposition party leaders and representatives of independent media and civil society.

We take note of information the Permanent Mission of Belarus has shared in Geneva on this subject, so far. However, taking into account the aforementioned concerns and recognizing the value of the dialogue with the State concerned, we would like to encourage your Government to participate, in cooperation with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in an interactive informal briefing to be held prior to the next session of the Human Rights Council, on the human rights situation in Belarus and with representatives of other states and all interested stakeholders, including those of civil society.

We estimate such a dialogue as a good instrument to inform the UN member states and other stakeholders on the human rights situation in Belarus, since openness and constructiveness has always proved of benefit.

We look forward to your positive and urgent consideration of this request.

(signed) Ambassador Marius Grinius
Permanent Representative of Canada

(signed) Ambassador Vesna Vuković
Permanent Representative of Croatia

(signed) Ambassador Tatiana Lopicus
Permanent Representative of Moldova

(signed) Ambassador Bente Angell-Hansen
Permanent Representative of Norway

(signed) Ambassador Jürg Lauber
Special Representative of Switzerland
to the Human Rights Council

(signed) Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe
United States Ambassador
for Human Rights

On behalf of the European Union:

(signed) Ambassador Angelos Pangratis
Head of the EU Delegation

(signed) Ambassador András Dékány
Permanent Representative of Hungary