

**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

Brussels, 14 September 2001

11812/01 (Presse 320)

P. 152/01

**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union**  
**on the holding of presidential elections in Belarus**

The European Union endorses the conclusions drawn by the International Limited Election Observation Mission on the presidential elections held in Belarus on 9 September and greatly deplores the fact that those elections were not carried out in accordance with the OSCE rules for the conduct of democratic elections. The European Union deplores, in particular, the harassment of representatives of the opposition, national observers, independent media and non-governmental organisations. The European Union urges the Belarus authorities to respect the rights of such persons.

The European Union would point out that the development of its relations with Belarus is essentially dependent on respect for human rights and the progress of democracy in that country. In that context, the European Union welcomes the emergence in Belarus of a degree of pluralism and of a civil society which is aware of the challenges of democracy, as the International Mission was able to note. The European Union regrets that the Belarus authorities have not seized the opportunity afforded by these presidential elections to engage their country fully on the path of democracy. The European Union hopes that Belarus will now choose to engage on the course of political liberalisation, respect for human rights and the introduction of the rule of law.

Internet: <http://ue.eu.int/Newsroom>  
E-mail: [press.office@consillium.eu.int](mailto:press.office@consillium.eu.int)

11812/01 (Presse 320 - G)

The European Union will continue to support the transition to democracy and will hold consultations on the subject with all the political forces of Belarus which are prepared to work in the same direction. It supports the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group, which is in a position to contribute to that transition. It will continue to follow developments in Belarus closely.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, and the EFTA countries, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.

---