

PRESS RELEASE

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Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on monitoring of the elections in Belarus

The European Union attaches vital importance to the development of democracy in Belarus, a participant State in the OSCE, which has entered into important commitments in this respect.

The European Union would therefore like the forthcoming Presidential elections to be held in Belarus on 9 September 2001 to be free and fair. It is essential, in its view, that the elections and the preparations for them should be subject to credible international monitoring and, to that end, that the long-term observers should be able to begin their work as from 1 August.

The European Union considers that only coordinated monitoring by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) would have the necessary credibility. It urges Belarus, in accordance with the OSCE's Copenhagen document, to invite without delay the ODIHR to monitor the elections and the campaign to precede them, so as to enable the ODIHR to draw up a sufficiently detailed and in-depth report. The European Union considers that any invitation that Belarus might extend on a bilateral basis to the Member States of the EU to monitor the Presidential elections could not take the place of an invitation extended directly to the ODIHR.

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Compliance by Belarus with the international commitments it has entered into in the context of the OSCE would be likely to contribute to the subsequent development of its relations with the European Union.

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.
