

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 10 December 1998

13924/98 (Presse 443)
P 151/98

Joint declaration
by the Presidency of the Council of the European Union
and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus

1. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus and the Presidency of the European Union, pursuant to the talks held from December 2 to December 9, 1998, desirous to find a mutually acceptable way to resolve the situation that has arisen from the fact that the residences of the Heads of Mission of European Union Member States on the territory of the "Drozdy" complex are protected by the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and are inviolable, whereas this territory has meanwhile been declared to be the residence of the President of the Republic of Belarus, make the following declaration in order to find a political solution to this situation:
2. The Republic of Belarus will, through its active support and cooperation, endeavour to secure long-term contractual arrangements for the Heads of Mission to move into new residences, in accordance with the provisions of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The Missions concerned will, for their part, endeavour to keep the period of time required to come to contractual agreements concerning the taking-over of the new residences as short as practicable. In this period of time, the renting of temporary residences might be necessary.
3. As soon as the Missions of the sending States have taken over their temporary or permanent new residences and have notified the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus thereof, the Heads of Mission - after establishing a pertinent EU understanding - will return to Minsk and notify the Minister of Foreign Affairs accordingly, with a view to the subsequent vacation of the residences on the territory of the "Drozdy" complex within one month.

13924/98 (Presse 443 - G)

- 1 -
EN

4. In accordance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, in particular with regard to the inviolability of the residences of Heads of Mission, and taking into account the fact that valid lease contracts exist/existed for the premises in the "Drozdy" complex, the residences in Drozdy will be accessible as follows:
 - a) the Heads of Mission will, within the period referred to in para. 3 above, have generous access to their residences on the territory of the "Drozdy" complex in order for them to prepare and carry out the final vacation of their residences. At least 24 hours notice will be given by the Missions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus of the first access to and final vacation of the residences.
 - b) Members of the staff of the Mission will, from now on, have access to their rented residences on the territory of the "Drozdy" complex when necessary and at least three times per month, notifying the Belarusian authorities at least 24 hours in advance. Staff access in the period of Ambassadors' access will be possible within the limits of the modalities set out in paras. 4a) and 4b).
 5. At the time of notification that vacation of the rented residences on the territory of the "Drozdy" complex has been completed, the existing lease agreements, in so far as they have not yet expired, will be considered terminated.
 6. The Republic of Belarus is ready to provide compensation, the amount and modalities of which will be determined by bilateral arrangements starting without delay after Ambassadors have vacated their residences in the "Drozdy" complex.
 7. Other States whose Heads of Mission have their residences on the territory of the "Drozdy" complex are free to align themselves with this joint declaration.
 8. This joint declaration will be made public in Brussels, Vienna and Minsk.
-