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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union**  
**on the situation in Belarus**

The European Union condemns in the strongest terms the violence which took place at the demonstration in Minsk on 17 October.

The European Union calls for the immediate release of the political figures arrested after the demonstration, in particular Mr Statkevitch, and of those previously detained.

The European Union reiterates the importance it attaches to a genuine political dialogue, yet to be established in practice, designed in due course to create the conditions for the holding of free and democratic elections, with international observers. Such elections are the only way for the people of Belarus to achieve genuine political legitimacy.

The European Union rejects the one-sided version of events claiming that the opposition was solely to blame and accusing the West of helping to finance the demonstration.

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

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