



# **European Union**

## **Statement**

**ILO Governing Body, 320<sup>th</sup> session**

**(13 – 27 March 2014)**

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**"Belarus: Follow-up given to the recommendations of the 2004  
Commission of Inquiry"**

**(GB.320/INS/7)**

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**Geneva, 26 March 2014**

**- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -**

**ILO Governing Body, 320th session**

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**"Belarus: Follow-up given to the recommendations of the 2004 Commission of Inquiry"**

**(GB.320/INS/7)**

**EU Statement**

Thank you chair,

I speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The following countries align themselves with this declaration: Turkey\*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia†, Montenegro‡, Iceland‡, Albania†, Norway§ and the Republic of Moldova.

We attach importance to the relations with Belarus, a country which neighbours the EU, and to the citizens of that country. We remain gravely concerned about the lack of respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law in Belarus. We are committed to a policy of critical engagement with Belarus and recall that the development of bilateral relations under the Eastern Partnership is conditional on progress towards respect by Belarus for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

We promote freedom of expression, opinion, assembly and association. Democracy cannot exist without these rights. We remain engaged in a European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarusian society.

While we appreciate that the Government accepted a direct contacts mission ahead of the Governing Body meeting, at the same time we are concerned by its report. We are particularly concerned by the statement that there has been no fundamental change or significant progress in implementing the commission of inquiry's recommendations of 2004 to amend legislation in force. We are also concerned by the reported new problems arisen.

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\* Candidate country

† The Candidate countries former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia as well as potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

‡ Candidate Country Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

§ Liechtenstein and Norway are members of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.

We reiterate our calls to amend or repeal legislation not in conformity with the right of workers to organise and eliminate the obstacles to trade union registration, in particular the requirements imposed by Presidential Decree No. 2 on legal address and 10 per cent minimum membership requirements. These obstacles hinder the establishment and functioning of trade unions in practice.

We note that in several instances of the report the Authorities of Belarus request further technical cooperation from the Office. We also note that the Conclusions of the Direct Contacts Mission point towards the usefulness of technical cooperation to improve the work of the tripartite Council. We call on the Office to scale up its assistance to Belarus and provide the technical assistance requested without delay.

The European Union is also willing to assist Belarus to meet its obligations in this regard and will continue to closely monitor the situation in Belarus.

Thank you chair.