

**MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEES OF THE
PARLIAMENTS OF LATVIA, ESTONIA, LITHUANIA, THE SENATE AND
THE SEJM OF POLAND**

RIGA

20 March 2006

**JOINT DECLARATION
ON THE SITUATION IN BELARUS
ADOPTED BY THE LATVIAN, ESTONIAN, LITHUANIAN AND
POLISH PARLIAMENTARY EUROPEAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEES**

Taking into consideration that:

- during the last few weeks several civil society activists, independent election observers and opposition leaders have been arrested in Belarus;
- the Belarusian authorities have imposed various restrictions on independent candidates by allowing a very short pre-election campaign period, low campaign funding, limited opportunities to use public and private mass media, as well as making independent candidates dependent on local authorities in choosing places for holding meetings with voters, while at the same time the incumbent President has unlimited access to the mass media;
- Belarus is the only country in Eastern Europe which has not yet signed partnership and cooperation agreement with the European Union, and thus it is becoming increasingly isolated politically and economically,

the Latvian, Estonian Lithuanian, and Polish parliamentary European Affairs Committees:

- 1) express their regret about the deterioration of the political situation and violations of civil rights and human rights in Belarus;
- 2) strongly condemn attacks aimed at the mass media, journalists, opposition members, human rights advocates and minorities;
- 3) condemn repressions committed the Belarusian authorities have imposed members and leaders of civil society who by their activities promote democratic processes in Belarus;
- 4) support a democratic process in Belarus;

- 5) as parliamentary bodies of democratic countries, condemn and regard as unacceptable the arrest campaign launched in violation of international human rights principles by the Belarusian authorities against opposition leaders;
- 6) express their support to all those democratic forces in Belarus that resist the incumbent public authorities and their attempt to prevent open and fair elections and observance of human rights;
- 7) call on the parliaments and governments of EU member states, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe and other international organizations to provide specific and coordinated support to the democratic forces and civil society of Belarus;
- 8) call on the European Commission to consider the possibility of developing a new strategy regarding Belarus if the international democratic standards were violated during the election process and after the elections; recommend to include in this strategy specific proposals on more flexible provision of EU technical assistance and support creation of civil society, as well as democracy in Belarus;
- 9) recalling the fact that Latvia is representing the EU Presidency in Belarus, call on the Latvian Parliament to inform other EU parliaments, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe about this resolution in the first half of 2006.