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Finland's EU Presidency

General Assembly
61st Session
Third Committee
Agenda item 67 c
UNITED NATIONS

GENERAL STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION
BEFORE THE VOTE

Situation of human rights in Belarus
A/C.3/61/L.40

Mr. Janne Jokinen

Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations

New York, 22 November 2006

(check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Chairman,

The universality and interdependence of all human rights and fundamental freedoms are principles that the European Union holds dear. As we have repeatedly stated, no country – large or small – can be regarded as being beyond or above consideration by international human rights fora.

The EU firmly believes that the Third Committee of the General Assembly must address the situation of human rights in Belarus, based on the gravity of the situation on the ground. The text before us reaffirms that all States have the obligation to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and to fulfil their international obligations. It notes the commitments Belarus has made under a number of international human rights instruments, and calls on it to honour those commitments.

The draft resolution sets out particular issues of concern to the international community, including the European Union, in the human rights situation in Belarus. Elections held in the recent past have fallen short of international standards. Intimidation of opposition candidates and groups has been systematic. Judicial proceedings all too often lack the necessary elements of due process, and are used as a tool for political intimidation. Human rights defenders, national minority organisations, independent media, religious organisations, among others, face harassment on a regular basis. Senior officials in the Government who have been implicated in the enforced disappearance of political opponents enjoy impunity.

Unfortunately none of these concerns are new. Previous resolutions by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights have addressed them, and various United Nations and other international human rights mechanisms have made recommendations on how to rectify the situation. We regret that the Government of Belarus has chosen to ignore them. Systematic, widespread and serious violations of human rights continue to persist in Belarus. Were we to choose not to address the human rights situation in Belarus, we would let down the very people whose human rights we have committed ourselves to protecting.

Mr. Chairman,

The European Union strongly urges delegations to consider the draft resolution before us on its own merits. We will be voting in favor of draft resolution L.40 on the situation of human rights in Belarus.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.