UNITED NATIONS
UNGA 61
3rd Committee
SITUATION OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (A/C.3/61/L.42)

Explanation of Vote on behalf of the European Union

H.E. Ms. Kirsti Lintonen
Ambassador
Permanent Representive of Finland to the United Nations

New York, 22 November 2006

(check against delivery)

Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 222, New York, N.Y. 10017
tel. +1-212-355-2100, fax +1-212-759-6156 • http://www.finlandun.org

Mr. Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and Moldova align themselves with this explanation of vote.

There are a number of very important and very serious human rights resolutions, including on human rights situations in specific countries, that have to be considered by this year's 61st session of the UN General Assembly Third Committee. This draft, however, tabled by Belarus on the situation of democracy and human rights in the United States of America, is not one of those resolutions.

Mr. Chairperson,

The EU firmly believes in the principle that it is the gravity of the human rights situation on the ground that should determine whether the General Assembly considers a draft resolution on any country. We also believe, Mr. Chairperson, that the country's willingness and its demonstrated efforts to address these issues and to engage in constructive dialogue must be taken into account. Belarus has, so far, failed to either cooperate fully or to enter into any meaningful dialogue with the UN's human rights machinery. That is why we fully support the resolution on the situation of human rights in Belarus that has been tabled by the USA, and that is also why we reject the text that is before you.

Mr. Chairperson,

The resolution on Belarus, which all EU Member States have cosponsored, is a critical yet balanced text, highlighting a series of well documented and serious human rights violations and urging the Government of Belarus to finally adhere to its international obligations and commitments. For this General Assembly, the resolution on Belarus is just the latest expression of the international community's growing concern about the situation in that country, following the resolutions on Belarus adopted by the Commission of Human Rights in 2004 and 2005.

By contrast, however, this Belarus-sponsored resolution on the situation of democracy and human rights in the USA clearly does not reflect the principle that the gravity of the situation on the ground is determinative. It is well known that the EU has concerns about some of the issues that are covered by this text. In the ongoing dialogue between the EU and the USA on human rights issues, we regularly raise these concerns and we work together to address them. We also welcome the United States' readiness to listen to criticism from the UN's treaty bodies and human rights mechanisms, not to mention from its own vibrant civil society. As with all countries, we encourage the USA to enhance its cooperation

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

with these important UN human rights mechanisms, as EU countries seek to do themselves.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is very obvious that this resolution is a reaction to the USA's resolution on the human rights situation in Belarus itself, and is clearly intended to divert attention from Belarus' own concerning human rights record.

If these were not reasons enough against this draft resolution, Mr. Chairperson, we would like to recall as a final point that the author of this text has also jointly tabled another resolution in this Committee that purports to advocate dialogue on human rights issues and is highly critical of country-specific resolutions. The inherent contradiction in presenting these two proposals is glaring, and makes the draft before you even more untenable. We firmly believe that Belarus itself should live up to the standards expressed in its own documents.

For all of these reasons, Mr. Chairperson, the EU will vote against this resolution.