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Finland's EU Presidency

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

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
IN ACCORDANCE WITH RULE 116
OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
AGAINST THE MOTION TO ADJOURN THE DEBATE

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.

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 and Serbia, as well as Ukraine and Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

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

Mr. Chairman,

It is an important matter of principle for the European Union to vote against any motion to close the debate on an item under discussion. The calling of this motion is clearly aimed at preventing this Committee from dealing with a country-specific situation, namely the situation of human rights in Belarus. As we have repeatedly stated, no country – large or small – can be regarded as being beyond or above consideration by international human rights fora. This would run counter to the principles of universality and interdependence of all human rights.

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. Previous resolutions by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights addressing the issue, as well as recommendations made by various United Nations and other international human rights mechanisms, have been ignored, and the systematic, widespread and serious violations of human rights continue to persist in Belarus. By choosing not to address the situation, we would let down the very people whose human rights we have committed ourselves to protecting.

Mr Chairman,

If successful, this motion to adjourn the debate would prevent us from even considering the issues covered in the resolution. This runs contrary to the spirit of dialogue to which we are all attached. The General Assembly would undermine its own credibility if it remained silent on grave and widespread violations of human rights in situations where the country concerned refuses to cooperate in any meaningful manner with the international human rights system.

The EU strongly urges delegations to vote against this motion to adjourn the debate for reasons of principle, regardless of their voting intentions on the draft resolution contained in document L.40.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.