



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1307 Vienna, 25 March 2021

EU Statement on the Freedom of Assembly in the Russian Federation

On 13 March, Russian law-enforcement authorities disbanded the first federal forum of municipal deputies in Moscow and temporarily arrested about 200 people, among them many local politicians and journalists.

It is an essential part of the democratic process that all political forces, including the opposition, are allowed to prepare without undue impediments for elections, to define strategies and to plan its campaigning. The break-up of the meeting and the temporary arrest of their participants risk undermining the credibility of the competition in the run-up to the Duma elections scheduled for September.

We recall our concern regarding the violent suppression of peaceful protests across Russia following the arrest and sentencing of Mr A. Navalny. Administrative proceedings against participants have reached a total of 9.000 cases according to independent observers.

The European Union calls on the Russian Federation to respect its international obligations and human rights commitments, including the right of peaceful assembly and to “respect the right of individuals and groups to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties or other political organizations and provide such political parties and organizations with the necessary legal guarantees to enable them to compete with each other on a basis of equal treatment before the law and by the authorities”, as agreed in the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE in 1990.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA and CANADA align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.