

# Press Release

## Parliamentary Assembly Communication Unit

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### Presidential election in Belarus: Lukashenko must ensure a free and fair electoral campaign

Strasbourg, 26.01.2006 - In the run-up to the presidential election in Belarus on March 2006, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) today called on the Lukashenko regime to refrain from "obstructing the free and fair running of the electoral campaign", and take "positive action to ensure that pluralist information can be provided".

At the end of an urgent debate, the Assembly deplored that freedom of expression is blatantly flouted, and noted that in the last two years "the situation has not improved but worsened". It called on member states to give "immediate financial and if necessary logistical support to independent broadcasting to Belarus from abroad".

The Assembly regretted that to date there could be no change in its policy towards the Belarusian regime. In order to renew dialogue, the parliamentarians said they expected "clear and conclusive signs" such as the possibility for all candidates to have the same freedom to campaign.

The adopted text welcomes the recent election of the single candidate of the Unified Democratic Forces, Alexander Milinkevich, who took part in the debate. The members encouraged these forces to maintain their unity, irrespective of ideological differences, in the aftermath of the election, irrespective of its results.

The parliamentarians asked for the immediate release of political prisoners, the repeal of the anti-revolution law, and the conduct of an independent investigation into the fate of disappeared persons.

Vladimir Konoplev, Chairman of the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, took also part in the debate.

For more information, please visit <http://assembly.coe.int> or <http://www.coe.int/PASession>

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 315 members from the national parliaments of the 46 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Bruno Haller.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).