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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on statements by the Council and Commission
pursuant to Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure
on Belarus

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on behalf of the EFD Group

European Parliament resolution on Belarus

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Belarus,
 - having regard to the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit of 7 May 2009,
 - having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Commission has launched the Eastern Partnership Initiative to step up cooperation with a number of Eastern European countries including Belarus,
- B. whereas the European Union should see Belarus as a crucial partner on issues including energy security, transport, cultural cooperation, environment and food safety,
- C. whereas improved relations between the EU and Belarus are in the interests of both European countries and Belarus itself,
- D. whereas the Eastern Partnership Initiative established ‘thematic platforms’ for multilateral cooperation in four main areas: democracy, good governance and stability; economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies; energy security; and contacts between people,
- E. whereas the first meeting of foreign ministers within the framework of the Eastern Partnership was held in Brussels on 8 December 2009,
1. Welcomes the start of the implementation of the Eastern Partnership following its launch at the Prague Summit on 7 May 2009 and notes with satisfaction all the recent steps and initiatives taken to strengthen and deepen relations between the EU and the partner countries;
 2. Welcomes the fact that, in response to the positive steps taken by Belarus, the Commission has intensified dialogue with it in fields such as energy, the environment, customs, transport and food safety; calls on the Commission to consider further measures to improve the business climate, trade, investment, energy and transport infrastructure and cross-border cooperation between the EU and Belarus, so as to contribute to the wellbeing and prosperity of the citizens of Belarus;
 3. Welcomes President Lukashenko’s announcement, in an interview with the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* on 25 November 2009, of an imminent information campaign on the issue of the death penalty;
 4. Welcomes recent statements by the Belarusian Foreign Affairs Minister, Sergei Martynov, indicating a high level of interest in Belarus’s active participation in the Eastern

Partnership Initiative, and constructive steps in that direction;

5. Welcomes the establishment of the EU-Neighbourhood East Parliamentary Assembly as a forum for dialogue on political, economic, social and cultural issues between the European Union and the partner countries; emphasises that the parliamentary assembly should be constituted in accordance with the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit declaration, in which ‘the participants of the Prague Summit invite the parliamentarians from the European Union and the partner countries to come forward with ideas regarding the European Parliament’s proposal to establish an EU-Neighbourhood East Parliamentary Assembly (EURO-NEST PA)’;
6. Welcomes the fact that the World Bank has increased the amount of financial assistance for Belarus in 2010-2011 from USD 100 million to USD 250 million;
7. Calls on the Council and the Commission to take further steps to simplify visa procedures for Belarusian citizens, as such action is crucial to making Belarus part of European and regional processes and ending the country’s isolation; urges the Council and the Commission, in that context, to consider reducing the cost of visas for Belarusian citizens entering the Schengen Area and simplifying the visa procedure;
8. Welcomes the activities of the Belarusian ‘European Humanities University’, in exile in Vilnius, which provides young Belarusians with access to higher education of an international standard based on academic freedom; calls on the Belarusian Government to enable the university to return to Belarus legally and re-establish itself, under suitable conditions, in Minsk;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, the Secretariat of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Parliament and Government of Belarus.