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Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the Khodorkovskii/Lebedev case

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, made today the following statement:

"The European Union and indeed the wider European public have since the start of the trial been following proceedings against former owner of the oil company YUKOS, Mikhail Khodorkovskii, and his business associate, Platon Lebedev, who were sentenced today to six additional years of imprisonment. Allegations have been made of irregularities in the proceedings, and these are a matter of serious concern and disappointment to us.

Judicial independence and the right of each and every citizen to a fair trial, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Russia is a party, are of crucial importance to the strategic partnership between the European Union and the Russian Federation and rule of law is a cornerstone of the Partnership for Modernisation.

The European Union will continue to follow the Khodorkovskii and Lebedev case closely and will raise this issue with Russia. As emphasised at the EU-Russia Summit on 7 December in Brussels, the EU expects Russia to respect its international commitments in the field of human rights and the rule of law."

P R E S S

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