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S T A T E M E N T

**by the Spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton
on the release of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and on amnesty resolution**

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

"The High Representative welcomes the release from prison of Mikhail Khodorkovsky following a pardon. The EU has followed the Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev case for more than ten years and has continuously expressed its concerns about alleged violations in the trials which reflect systemic problems in the Russian judiciary.

The High Representative would also like to welcome the amnesty approved on the 20th Anniversary of Russia's Constitution. The expected release of some defendants on trial under the so-called 'Bolotnaya' case, most of whom have been in pre-trial detention for more than a year, the expected release of 'Pussy Riot' members Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina, and the expected closure of the 'Artic Sunrise' case together with release of Greenpeace activists, would be positive developments. The High Representative looks forward to seeing all those concerned by the amnesty freed and released from prosecution as soon as possible.

The EU strongly encourages Russia to pursue its reforms towards establishing a transparent, independent and reliable judicial system and to uphold its commitments to Human Rights, the Rule of Law and non-discrimination, ensuring the respect for the freedom of assembly, association and expression."

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

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