**Marietje Schaake,** *on behalf of the ALDE Group***.** – Mr President, it’s hard to believe that it’s been almost nine years since I first submitted amendments for a European Magnitsky Act, and the urgency for us of having an EU-wide smart mechanism to hold human rights violators individually to account has only become more pressing since then. Given that the UN Security Council and the UN generally is often paralysed and blocked by vetoes, the EU should show leadership and join the coalition of the willing – if you want to look at it that way – between the USA, the UK, Canada and the Baltic states, which already have ‘Magnitsky’ laws.

Targeted human rights sanctions, including asset freezes, entry bans and also the calling out by name of perpetrators of the worst human rights violations, whether they be state or non-state actors, can make a huge difference, including in terms of differentiating between the punishment of individuals versus hitting entire populations. It is the elites who often participate in these human rights violations who enjoy buying real estate in Europe, sending their children to our top universities or going shopping in our wonderful capitals. We cannot allow such ‘business as usual’ to continue for the murderers of journalists or the rapists of women.

When we talk about sanctions regimes, let us also look at ourselves critically because, despite sanctions being in place, Ali Mamlouk from Syria, on our blacklist, visited Italy, companies from the EU built the Kerch Strait Bridge, chemicals were exported from Belgium to Syria – and the list goes on. Clearly we’re only as credible as the weakest link in our own behaviour.

Concluding, a horizontal human rights sanction regime is essential, but it can never replace the need to hold perpetrators to account through criminal prosecution in domestic and international courts. It is high time to end impunity and, if we adopt this regulation, it would also be a small step towards justice for Sergei Magnitsky.