Joint Statement by:

- the Vice-President responsible for the Sakharov Network, MEP Heidi HAUTALA,
- the Chair of the Delegation for relations with Belarus, MEP Juozas OLEKAS,
- the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, MEP Maria ARENA, and
- the European Parliament's Standing Rapporteur for Belarus, MEP Petras AUŠTREVIČIUS

on democracy activist and Sakharov Prize laureate Maryia Kalesnikava's deteriorating health

Brussels, 30 November 2022 - "We are deeply alarmed by the recent reports pointing to a sharp deterioration in Maryia Kalesnikava's health. A key figure of the democratic movement during the 2020 presidential election campaign in Belarus, Sakharov Prize laureate Maryia Kalesnikava resisted the illegitimate authorities' attempt to force her into exile. In reprisal, she was sentenced in September 2021 to 11 years in prison on trumped-up charges of 'harming national security'.

After suffering for many days from the harsh conditions of solitary confinement – the so-called 'punishment cell' of her Homyel prison, allegedly for 'being impolite', she was admitted in intensive care and underwent stomach surgery on Monday.

Maryia Kalesnikava must be granted immediate and unimpeded access to medical care. Lukashenka's regime is entirely responsible for her health and life. Any further deterioration in her health, as a result of her unfair imprisonment and mistreatment, will only deepen the pariah status of Lukashenka's illegitimate regime.

We reiterate our call to the Belarusian authorities to put an end to their continued assault on the defenders of democracy and freedom, to release immediately and unconditionally all political prisoners – notably the four Sakharov Prize laureates currently jailed in the country: Ales Bialiatski, Maryia Kalesnikava, Mikalai Statkevich and Siarhei Tsikhanouski, and to engage in a genuine, constructive dialogue with representatives of the democratic forces and civil society in order to find a way out of the political crisis.
Lukashenka and his accomplices bear the full responsibility for the manifold injustices inflicted upon the people of Belarus. They should keep in mind that the day will come when they will face justice themselves.

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