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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for the debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 115 of the Rules of Procedure

by José Ribeiro e Castro, Jacek Protasiewicz, Urszula Gacek, Charles Tannock, Jerzy Buzek, Bernd Posselt, Eija-Riitta Korhola, Tunne Kelam

on behalf of the PPE-DE Group

on Belarus

European Parliament resolution on Belarus

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Belarus, in particular to its resolution of 3 April 2006,
 - having regard to the November 2006 European Commission declaration of the European Union's readiness to renew its relationship with Belarus and its people within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP),
 - having regard to its Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought, which was awarded in December 2004 to the Belarusian Association of Journalists and in December 2006 to Aleksander Milinkevich,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the European Parliament has repeatedly condemned the failed Presidential, Parliamentary, and local elections in Belarus,
- B. whereas the European Parliament has called on the Commission and the Council to make proposals to put further pressure on Lukashenko's regime in international organisations and demanded that a complete package of concrete and direct smart sanctions - severely affecting the perpetrators of oppression without adding any further suffering to the citizens of Belarus - be brought forward,
- C. whereas the European Parliament particularly condemned the fact that local democracy, which is the cornerstone of any democratic governance and which expresses the will of ordinary people to attain their genuine hopes and expectations, has been disregarded and neglected in Belarus,
1. Deeply regrets the fact that the situation of democracy, human rights and the rule of law is not improving in Belarus: continuous arbitrary arrests of members of civil society and opposition activists, notably Aleksander Milinkevich, and the clampdown of the independent media, contradicts the recent rhetoric of the Belarusian government of their wish to improve relations with the European Union;
 2. Expresses its regret over the sentence passed on the journalist, Aliaksandr Zdzvishkou of three years' imprisonment, considering the punishment measure to be unjustly harsh and calls on the Belarus Government to reconsider the decision;
 3. Takes note of the recent release of several democratic opposition activists including the leaders of the Young Front (Malady Front); at the same time condemns the arrests of these activists, who were detained for 15 days in prison and faced expulsion from university, following peaceful demonstrations on 16 January 2008 in Minsk to mark the

day of solidarity with imprisoned Belarusian opposition activists and the families of missing prominent Belarusians;

4. Urges the Belarus authorities to release immediately and unconditionally the last remaining political prisoner, Alyaksandr Kazulin, and to stop using intimidation, harassment, targeted arrests and politically motivated prosecutions against the activists of the democratic opposition and civil society in Belarus;
5. Welcomes the recent developments on the agreements to establish the European Commission's Delegation in Minsk as a positive step towards renewing dialogue with the European Union;
6. Recalls that in November 2006 the Europe Union declared its readiness to renew its relationship with Belarus and its people within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as soon as the Belarusian Government demonstrates respect for democratic values and for the basic right of the Belarusian people;
7. Underlines that in order to engage in any substantial dialogue with the EU, Belarus needs to implement the remaining eleven conditions laid down in the non-paper *What the EU could bring to Belarus*;
8. Condemns the fact that Belarus is the last country in Europe which still practises the death penalty, which runs counter to European values;
9. Urges the Belarusian authorities to abolish Decree No. 70 of 8 February 2008, the provisions of which violate the right of education of the Belarusian citizens by creating barriers to entry into institutions of higher education;
10. Urges the authorities of Belarus to implement OSCE standards in the organization of the upcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for 28 September 2008; calls on the government to give democratic opposition representatives access to district election commissions, to grant registration to all parliamentary candidates and their observers, and not to create obstacles for a comprehensive and complete international election observation mission;
11. Calls on the Commission and the Council to consider the possibilities of waiving the cost of visas for Belarusian citizens entering the Schengen territory;
12. Calls on Member States in the Schengen area to use all available tools (national visa costs) in order to facilitate the movement of Belarusian citizens within each Member State territory, particularly for:
 - Children under 6 years of age;
 - Pupils, students, post-graduate students;
 - Researchers, on purpose of the scientific research;
13. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the international community as a whole to extend more support to the civil society of Belarus and, in particular, to increase financial aid to the independent media, to non-governmental organizations and to Belarusian students studying abroad;

14. Expresses solidarity with the united democratic opposition of Belarus and all Belarusian citizens who strive for an independent, open and democratic Belarus based on the rule of law; encourages the leaders of the opposition to demonstrate unity and resolve in the upcoming parliamentary elections;
15. 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, and the Belarus authorities.