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## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

to wind up the debate on statements by the Council and Commission

pursuant to Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on Belarus

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on behalf of the ECR Group

**European Parliament resolution on Belarus**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Belarus, in particular that of 2 April 2009 on bi-annual evaluation of the EU-Belarus dialogue,
  - having regard to the conclusions on Belarus reached by the General Affairs and External Relations Council at its meeting of 17 November 2009, involving a further suspension of the application of the visa ban on certain Belarusian officials, including President Alexander Lukashenko, and the extension of the restrictive measures until October 2010,
  - having regard to the Commission Communication of 3 December 2008 concerning the Eastern Partnership Initiative (COM(2008)0823),
  - having regard to the Declaration on the Eastern Partnership issued by the European Council at its meeting of 19-20 March 2009 and to the Joint Declaration issued at the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit of 7 May 2009,
  - having regard to the Commission statement of 21 November 2006 on 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 Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Council, in its above-mentioned conclusions of 17 November 2009, welcomed the intensification of the EU-Belarus political dialogue and technical cooperation and Belarus's participation in the Eastern Partnership,
- B. whereas the Council, after evaluating developments in Belarus following the decision taken on 16 March 2009 in accordance with the terms set out in its Common Position 2009/314/CFSP, has decided to extend the restrictive measures against certain Belarusian officials and to suspend the application of those travel restrictions, both for a 12-month period,
- C. whereas the EU has established a Human Rights Dialogue with Belarus,
- D. whereas, in response to the positive steps taken by Belarus, the Commission has already stepped up dialogue with that country in fields such as energy, the environment, customs, transport and food safety,
- E. whereas the Council included Belarus in its decision of 20 March 2009 on the Eastern Partnership Initiative, which the Commission launched in its above-mentioned communication of 3 December 2008 with a view to stepping up cooperation with a number of eastern European countries,

- F. whereas the International Federation of Journalists, on the basis of the report of its fact-finding mission to Minsk (20-24 September 2009) carried out in collaboration with several international NGOs, has not identified any significant progress in the area of media freedom in Belarus,
- G. whereas Alyaksandr Milinkevich, leader of the Movement for Freedom, expressed regret that no human rights problems were raised during Silvio Berlusconi's visit to Minsk on 30 November 2009 and that the Italian Prime Minister did not meet civil society representatives while in Belarus,
- H. whereas on 2 November 2009 the Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko stated that 'relations with the European Union as a powerful consolidated partner are one of the fundamental factors in securing Belarus's independence and sovereignty, as well as economic, scientific and technological development',
- I. whereas, after two years of broadcasting, TV Belsat is the main independent source of information for Belarusians and the only television broadcaster which transmits a full range of programmes in the Belarusian language and is attracting an ever larger number of regular viewers in Belarus,
1. Supports the Council's decision to extend the restrictive measures against certain Belarusian officials and at the same time to suspend the application of those measures for a further 12-month period;
  2. Underlines the importance of the Human Rights Dialogue and believes it will contribute to positive developments in the area of civil and political freedoms in Belarus; remains concerned, nevertheless, about the human rights situation in Belarus and the cases of violations of human rights;
  3. Welcomes the active participation of the Belarusian Government in the Eastern Partnership Initiative as a way of building mutual understanding and providing an opportunity to address the parties' concerns and issues of common interest;
  4. Calls on the Commission to prepare recommendations for the possible adoption of directives on visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Belarus once the relevant conditions have been met; believes that such action is crucial to achieving the main goals of EU policy towards Belarus, namely enhancing people-to-people contact, making Belarus part of European and regional processes and rendering the democratisation process in the country irreversible;
  5. Calls on the Commission to draft a proposal on a joint interim plan for Belarus setting priorities for reforms inspired by the action plans developed in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy in order to revitalise the suspended ratification procedure for the EU-Belarus Partnership and Cooperation Agreement;
  6. Calls on the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to consider increasing their financial assistance to Belarus, paying special attention to the situation of small and medium-sized undertakings, while reviewing their mandate in order to encourage the transition of Belarus towards democracy, a pluralistic

society and a market economy; believes that this possible financial support should be made contingent on the achievement of substantial progress in the areas outlined below;

7. Insists that representatives of the Belarusian democratic opposition and civil society must be included in the dialogue between the EU and Belarus; in this context, recommends that Belarus should be granted observer status in the Euronest initiative and be represented by a delegation of five members from the Belarusian Parliament and five representatives drawn from the democratic opposition; insists that if the Belarusian authorities do not accept the '5+5' offer the Belarusian side should be represented by 10 members of civil society and the democratic opposition;
8. Urges Belarus to continue to cooperate with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) on the electoral code; expects that the changes to the electoral code agreed with experts from the OSCE/ODIHR, which, according to Lidziya Yarmoshyna, the Head of the Belarusian Central Electoral Commission, 'will meet European standards' and which have already been accepted by the Belarusian Government, will be adopted in the Belarusian House of Representatives during the current autumn session and will enter into force before the local elections planned for spring 2010;
9. Emphasises that bringing about free and fair elections in Belarus, at every level and in every respect, should be a political goal of the European Union, one which will enable Belarus to become a true European democracy;
10. Calls on all representatives of the EU and Member States to hold political meetings with representatives of the democratic opposition, particularly when visiting Belarus;
11. Urges the Belarusian Government to use the next 12 months to provide proof of genuine progress in the following areas:
  - bringing the Media Law into line with the recommendations contained in the report of the International Fact-Finding Mission to the Republic of Belarus of 20-24 September 2009, in particular as regards the following aspects: providing equal rights to all media outlets by lifting the ban on dissemination of independent print media through the state-owned distribution networks of the *Belsayuzdruk* (system of kiosks) and the Belarusian state postal service *Belposhta*; establishing clear criteria for the accreditation of journalists and for the allocation of broadcasting licences and frequencies; allowing journalists to perform their duties freely during public events; reforming the Media Law and the Law on Countering Extremism and the articles of the Criminal Code (368, 369, 369-1, 193-1) dealing with defamation;
  - guaranteeing freedom of association and assembly by repealing Article 193-1 of the Belarus Criminal Code which makes activity on behalf of unregistered public associations, political parties and foundations a criminal offence; allowing the registration of political parties (such as Belarusian Christian Democracy) and civil society organisations (e.g. *Viasna*);
  - safeguarding freedom of religion for churches other than the Belarusian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate);

- not hampering the activities of organisations already operating in Belarus, for example by demanding unreasonable rent increases or imposing illegal taxes on projects carried out using EU grants (e.g. the Belarusian Helsinki Committee);
  - guaranteeing political rights and freedoms by discontinuing the practice of politically motivated acts of intimidation, in particular dismissals from jobs and universities; stopping prosecutions for allegedly avoiding military service of students who have been expelled from universities for their civic stance and are being forced to obtain their education abroad; and reviewing all the cases of forcible conscription which have violated the legal rights of several young activists, such as Franak Viačorka, Ivan Šyla and Zmiter Fedaruk, and which are tantamount to State-practised hostage-taking;
12. Calls on the Belarusian authorities to review the sentences involving restrictions on their freedom imposed on the participants in a peaceful demonstration held in January 2008, the imprisonment of Artsyom Dubski and the cases of all those who are prisoners of conscience according to Amnesty International; calls for the immediate release of the entrepreneurs Mikalai Awtukhovich and Uladzimir Asipenka, who have been held in pre-trial detention for eight months;
  13. Calls on the Belarusian authorities to respect the rights of national minorities in accordance with the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of 1 February 1995; in that connection, urges the Belarusian authorities to recognise the Union of Poles in Belarus led by Angelika Borys, who was re-elected as its chairwoman at the Congress of the Union of Poles on 15 March 2009;
  14. Calls on the Belarusian authorities to respect the visa reciprocity principle; in view of the current suspension of sanctions on Belarusian officials, and with regard to the Council recommendation to the Commission to prepare negotiating directives on visa facilitation for Belarus, strongly condemns the recent denials of entry visas to Agnieszka Romaszewska, a director of TV Belsat, professors from Bialystok University, Christos Pourgourides, a Member of the Cyprus Parliament, and Emanuelis Zingeris, a Member of the Lithuanian Parliament;
  15. Urges the Belarusian authorities to develop genuine dialogue with representatives of the democratic opposition; emphasises, therefore, the importance of defining the role and working methods of the Public Advisory Council;
  16. Calls on the Commission to make full and effective use of the scope for supporting civil society and democratic developments in Belarus via the EIDHR;
  17. Calls on the Belarusian authorities to relax the rules restricting media freedom, such as burdensome registration requirements (also directed towards online media) and the ban on foreign funding;
  18. Believes that there is an urgent need to internationalise the TV Belsat project by incorporating financial support from additional countries and institutions, beginning with the European Union; calls on the Commission to grant financial support to TV Belsat and

to urge the Belarusian Government officially to register Belsat in Belarus; calls on the Belarusian Government, as a sign of goodwill and positive change, to enable the Belarusian European Humanities University (EHU) in exile in Vilnius (Lithuania) to return legally to Belarus on the basis of genuine guarantees that it will be able to operate freely and re-establish itself under suitable conditions for its future development in Minsk, in particular by allowing it to re-establish its library in Minsk by providing the premises and creating the conditions which will enable it to make the extensive collections in Belarusian, Russian, English, German and French open and accessible to all;

19. 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, the Secretariat of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Parliament and Government of Belarus.