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B6-0081/2008 }
B6-0087/2008 }
B6-0088/2008 }
B6-0091/2008 }
B6-0098/2008 } RC1

JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 115(5) 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, Tadeusz Zwiefka, Árpád Duka-Zólyomi, Christopher Fjellner, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group
- Pasqualina Napoletano, Jan Marinus Wiersma, Justas Vincas Paleckis, Andres Tarand, Genowefa Grabowska, on behalf of the PSE Group
- Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Jules Maaten, Marios Matsakis, on behalf of the ALDE Group
- Konrad Szymański, Hanna Foltyn-Kubicka, Adam Bielan, Wojciech Roszkowski, Ryszard Czarnecki, Ewa Tomaszewska, Janusz Wojciechowski, Zbigniew Krzysztof Kuźmiuk, Mieczysław Edmund Janowski, Inese Vaidere, Marcin Libicki, on behalf of the UEN Group
- Elisabeth Schroedter, Milan Horáček, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

replacing the motions by the following groups:

- ALDE (B6-0081/2008)
- PSE (B6-0087/2008)
- UEN (B6-0088/2008)
- PPE-DE (B6-0091/2008)
- Verts/ALE (B6-0098/2008)

on Belarus

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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 6 April 2006,
 - having regard to the European Commission’s declaration in November 2006 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 to the Belarusian Association of Journalists in December 2004 and to Aleksander Milinkevich in December 2006,
 - 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 and has pointed out that the Lukashenko regime lacks all democratic legitimacy and continues as the last dictatorship in Europe,
- 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,
- D. whereas the continuous political and administrative pressure exerted upon non-governmental organisations in Belarus, threatens their existence and undermines their independence,
- E. whereas in January there was a series of entrepreneurs’ protests in Minsk, and the leaders of these demonstrations were detained and often beaten,
- F. whereas positive developments on the establishment of the European Commission’s Delegation in Minsk have taken place recently,
1. Deeply regrets that the situation of democracy, human rights and the rule of law is not improving in Belarus; points out that continuous arbitrary arrests of members of civil society and opposition activists, notably the temporary detention of Aleksander Milinkevich, and the clampdown of the independent media, contradict the recent rhetoric of the Belarusian Government concerning their wish to improve relations with the European Union;

2. Expresses its regret over the sentence of the journalist Aliaksandr Zdzvishkou to three years' imprisonment, considering the punishment measure to be unjustly harsh, and calls on the Belarusian Government to reconsider the decision;
3. Takes note of the recent release of several democratic opposition activists including the leaders of the Youth of Belarusian Popular Front and Young Revival, 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 immediately and unconditionally release the remaining political prisoner, Alyaksandr Kazulin, and 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; encourages the Commission to use the full potential of the opening of the Delegation;
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 rights of the Belarusian people;
7. Underlines that in order to engage in any substantial dialogue with the EU, Belarus needs to implement the remaining conditions laid down in the 'non-paper' *What the EU could bring to Belarus*, which include the release of all political prisoners, abolition of the death penalty, the assurance of free media, the independence of the judiciary and respect for democratic values and for the basic rights of the Belarusian people;
8. Condemns the fact that Belarus is the last country in Europe which still practises the death penalty, which is counter to European values;
9. Urges the Belarusian authorities to abolish Decree No 70 of 8 February 2008, provisions of which violate the right to education of Belarusian citizens by creating barriers when entering institutions of higher education;
10. Urges the authorities of Belarus to implement OSCE standards in the organisation 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 Council to take further steps towards the facilitation and liberalisation of visa procedures for Belarusian citizens, as only such action can help to fulfil the main goal of EU policy towards Belarus, namely to facilitate and intensify people-to-

people contacts and to democratise that country; urges them in this context to consider the possibilities of waiving the cost of visas for Belarusian citizens entering the Schengen territory, which is the only way to prevent Belarus and its citizens from becoming increasingly isolated;

12. Calls on Member States in the Schengen area to use all available tools (national visa costs) to facilitate the movement of Belarusian citizens within each Member State's territory;
13. Calls on the Commission and 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 organisations and to Belarusian students studying abroad; welcomes the financial support given by the Commission to the European Humanities University in Vilnius (Lithuania); calls on the Commission and Council to consider financial support to the existing project aimed at the creation of the independent Belarusian television channel Belsat;
14. Expresses solidarity with the united democratic opposition of Belarus and the leader of the democratic movement, Aleksander Milinkevich, 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. Deplores the decision of the authorities of Belarus to repeatedly refuse entrance visas to the Members of the European Parliament and national parliamentarians in the last couple of years; calls on Belarus authorities not to create any further obstacles for the European Parliament Delegation for relations with Belarus to visit the country and to obtain first-hand experience and observations in Belarus;
16. Condemns the restrictions imposed by Belarusian authorities on foreign clergy aimed at limiting their access to the country to serve religious organisations, and calls on the Belarusian authorities to cease these restrictions;
17. 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 Belarusian authorities.