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Situation in Belarus

Greens/EFA motion for resolution

The European Parliament,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on Belarus, in particular that of 15 February 2012, 13 September 2011, 12 May 2011, 10 March 2011, 20 January 2011, 10 March 2010, 17 December 2009,

– having regard to the European Council Conclusion as of 1/2 March 2012 expressing its deep concern over the further deterioration of the situation in Belarus,

– having regard to the EU Foreign Affairs Council decision 2012/126/CFSP of 28 February 2012 to reinforce restrictive measures against Belarusian regime following further deterioration of the situation in Belarus, by adding additional 21 persons responsible for the repression of civil society and the democratic opposition on the travel ban and asset freeze list,

– having regard to the Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton of 28 February 2012 on the decision of Belarusian authorities to recall the EU Head of Delegation and Polish Ambassador to Minsk,

– having regard to the EU Foreign Affairs Council decision of 23 January 2012 concerning restrictive measures against Belarus,

– having regard to the Council of Europe resolution on the situation on Belarus of 25 January 2012 1857(2012) condemning continuous persecution of members of the opposition and the harassment of civil society activists, independent media and human rights defenders in Belarus,

– having regard to the UN Human Rights Council resolution of 17 June 2011 condemning human rights violations before, during and after the presidential elections in Belarus and calling on the Belarusian government to end the ‘persecution’ of opposition leaders,

– having regard to the Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit adopted in Prague on 7-9 May 2009 and the Declaration on the situation in Belarus adopted on the occasion of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Warsaw on 30 September 2011,

– having regard to the decision of the Annual Congress of the International Ice Hockey Federation in Bern of May 2009 to host the 2014 IIHF World Championship in Belarus, despite persecution of

Alyaksandr Lukashenka's political opponents and widespread human rights abuse in Belarus,

– having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the Prague Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit reaffirms the commitments, inter alia of Belarus, to the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

B. whereas the political situation in Belarus has been seriously deteriorating since the presidential elections of 19 December 2010 with repressive measures, being undertaken against members of the democratic opposition, the free media, civil society activists and human rights defenders, despite repeated calls from the international community to halt these measure immediately;

C. whereas EU-Belarus diplomatic conflict of unprecedented scope escalated after the Belarusian authorities requested that the ambassador of the European Union and the Polish ambassador leave the country and recalled its own ambassadors from Brussels and Warsaw as a response to the European Council decision of 28 February 2012;

D. whereas, in this context, Aleksandr Lukashenka followed up with a personal attack on the Foreign Minister of Germany using an obscure offensive lexicology that went beyond any diplomatic etiquette;

E. whereas, on 1 March 2012 a department head at the Prosecutor General's Office stated that 'persons calling on foreign states and international organizations to impose economic and other sanctions against Belarus might be subjected to a temporary ban on foreign travel and even to criminal prosecution' and, as a follow up to this, some human rights defenders, opposition politicians, independent journalists have not been allowed to leave Belarus or have been even turned away at the border with EU;

F. whereas the ambassadors of the EU Member States in Minsk were all called back for consultations to their capitals and all EU Member States summoned Belarusian ambassadors to their foreign ministries;

G. whereas the decision of the EU member states is a clear sign of solidarity and unity of the EU in foreign affairs matters and effectiveness of the EU actions and successful promotion of European values inside as well as outside the EU and its successful implementation will depend on its firm commitment to act united;

H. whereas the EU policy towards Belarus remains based on conditionality whereas the Belarusian authorities to improve EU-Belarus relations by releasing all the political prisoners;

I. whereas the improvement of bilateral relations with the European Union is also conditional on progress by the Government of Belarus towards the fulfilment of its OSCE commitments and the respect for fundamental human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles; including the release of political prisoners; whereas as a consequences increase its self-isolation, which would affect the Belarusian people and also lead to a stronger dependence on Russia;

J. whereas the EU Council has decided to extend the list of persons subject to sanctions because of the Belarusian regime's increasing repression of society;

K. whereas the EU is the largest trade partner for Belarus exports with 38%; whereas the Belarusian trade surplus with the EU was about $ 6 billion in 2011;

L. whereas EU Members States could not reach an agreement on the sanctioning of so called bagmen, influential businessmen that are closely linked to and supporting the regime;

M. whereas under the Belarus Democracy and Human Rights Act of 2011, signed into law by President Barack Obama on 3 January, the United States calls on the IIHF to suspend its plan to hold the 2014 championship in Belarus until the Government of Belarus releases all political prisoners;

1. Regrets the further deterioration of the relations between EU and Belarus; takes note of the decision to withdraw all the Ambassadors of the EU member states from Belarus, which is an unprecedented move in the EU's diplomatic practice and proves that the Belarusian authorities' attempts to divide the European Union over decisions on sanctions have failed;

2. Emphasise that a firm commitment of all EU member states as well as other democratic countries to act united in times of need may foster a successful promotion of universal values in such countries as Belarus and bring these countries closer towards the path of democratic transition;

3. Stresses that instead of choosing increasing self-isolation, Minsk should make the right choice for its people and open itself towards democracy;

4. Condemns the continuous persecution of human rights defenders, members of the democratic opposition and the harassment of civil society activists, independent media in Belarus for political reasons;

5. Demands an unconditional immediate release of all political prisoners; reiterates that there cannot be any progress on EU-Belarus dialogue without progress of Belarus towards democracy, human rights and rule of law and until all political prisoners, among others, Ales Bialiatski, Chair of the Human Rights Centre 'Viasna' and Vice-President of FIDH, two ex-presidential candidates Mikalai Statkevich and Andrei Sannikau, heads of presidential campaigns of democratic opposition candidates Pavel Seviarynets and Dzmitry Bandarenka as well as Syarhey Kavalenka, political prisoner detained for alleged breach of the house arrest, who has been on a prolonged hunger strike, which has led to a critical deterioration of his health and directly threatens his life, are unconditionally released and their civil rights are fully rehabilitated;

6. Calls on the National Ice Hockey Federations of the EU Member States and all other democratic nations to urge the IIHF, including during its meeting at its next Congress in May in Helsinki, Finland, to use the event the 2014 World Ice Hockey championship in Belarus as an opportunity to raise international public awareness of the critical situation of human and civic rights in Belarus and invites IIHF officials and sportsmen as free and responsible citizens to speak out against the repressions of the regime;

7. Welcomes the Council's decision of 28 February 2012 to strengthen restrictive measures and to add 21 persons responsible for the repression of civil society and the democratic opposition in Belarus to the list of those targeted by a travel ban and an asset freeze;

8. Calls on the Council to take a stock of the latest developments in EU-Belarus diplomatic relations as well as of a further deterioration of the human rights and basic freedoms situation in the country and urges it to adopt a respective decision concerning further restrictive measures including targeted economic sanctions on individual cases and to assure the full and consequent implementation of all take measures in the EU Member States;

9. Calls on the EU at the same time to strengthen its engagement with Belarusian civil society, enhance its ties with the opposition and support democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people;

10. 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.

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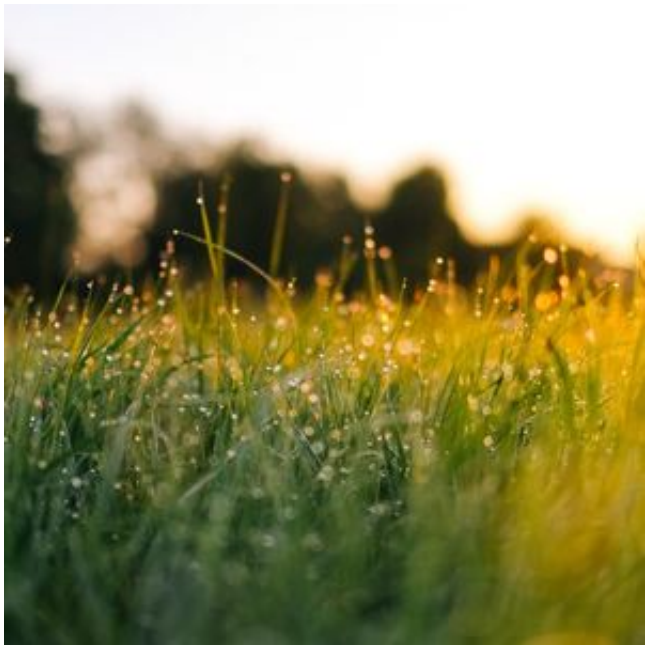
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