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EPP Headquarters | Press and Communication Department | 10, rue du Commerce | B-1000 Brussels
Phone: +32-(0)2-285 41 47 | Fax: +32-(0)2-300 80 13 | E-mail: press@epp.eu

Belarus: EPP expresses great concerns over the deterioration of democratic and economic situation

Brussels, 24 May 2011

Since the post-election crackdown of Belarusian authorities on opposition leaders, the European People's Party (EPP) has been following closely the situation in Belarus and supporting the democratic opposition and the political prisoners.

In this context, the EPP tried to organize working meetings in Belarus but the access to the country has been denied to the EPP members.

An EPP delegation led by **Corien Wortmann-Kool**, EPP & EPP Group Vice President went to Vilnius, Lithuania on 19 and 20 May 2011 in order to meet our observer member parties and partners.

"The fact that the EPP delegation did not obtain visas shows that the situation is deteriorating in Belarus. The basic values and principles such as democracy, rule of law and human rights are still being violated. The political trials are unacceptable," Corien Wortmann-Kool stated.

"While Belarus is facing a deep and serious economic crisis, the country's leadership is following a policy that will only further isolate Belarus and its people. Belarus remains thus at the top of the EPP agenda," Corien Wortmann-Kool added.

The delegation also met experts and officials in order to assess the possibility of additional and tougher sanctions against the regime of Lukashenko.

"We welcome the decision of the Council to place further 13 individuals on the list of travel restrictions and assets freeze. It is a first step towards tougher sanctions if there are no immediate changes in Belarus," Corien Wortmann-Kool concluded.

Note to editors:

The EPP is the largest and most influential European-level political party of the centre right, which currently includes 75 member-parties from 39 countries, the Presidents of the Commission, Council, and Parliament, 15 EU and 6 non-EU heads of state and government, 13 members of the European Commission and the largest Group in the European Parliament.

For more information:

Kostas Sasmatzoglou, Spokesman, Tel: +32-2-2854147

Javier Jiménez, Senior Press and Communication Officer, Tel: +32-475480446

This message sent to by **press@epp.eu**
EPP Headquarters - 10, rue du Commerce, B-1000 Brussels
Press and Communication Department
Kostas Sasmatzoglou, Spokesman (Tel: +32-2-2854147)
Javier Jimenez, Press Officer (Tel: +32-475480446)
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