



DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH BELARUS

- The Chairman -

STATEMENT

by Mr Bodgan KLICH,
Chairman of the Delegation for relations with Belarus

Brussels, 6 November 2006. On behalf of the Delegation for relations with Belarus, I deeply regret and deplore the decision of the authorities of Belarus to refuse entrance visas to the Members of the European Parliament, who were planning to visit Minsk on 9-12 November 2006.

The Working Group of our delegation, headed by Vice Chairman Joseph Muscat (PSE, Malta), had received a mandate from the Conference of Presidents to take part in the "Minsk Forum IX", an annual internationally recognized conference on Belarus.

This would have been the first opportunity for the delegation to visit Belarus since 2002 and its first-hand experiences and observations in Minsk would have provided the European Parliament with valuable insights for further shaping its position towards Belarus.

It is therefore very disappointing that the government of Belarus has once again chosen to further embark on the road of self-isolation, despite the declaration of Belarusian Ambassador Vladimir Senko in the last meeting of our delegation in October that the authorities in Minsk are open for dialogue with the European Union.

Contrary to any signs of change of heart in Minsk, it is clear that the situation of democracy, human rights and rule of law is further deteriorating in Belarus.

In particular, we are deeply concerned about the most recent court decision to sentence Dmitry Dashkevich, leader of the Young Front, to 18 months of imprisonment and we call on the Belarusian authorities to immediately release him as well as all other political prisoners.

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