Resolution on bi-annual evaluation of the EU-Belarus dialogue

2009/2567(RSP) - 16/03/2009

The Council evaluated the developments in Belarus and decided on the direction of EU policy, in particular on the further suspension of the **visa-ban** sanctions and the extension of restrictive measures.

In its conclusions, the Council welcomes that certain positive steps have been taken by Belarus following the Council's decision on the temporary suspension of the travel restrictions imposed on certain officials of Belarus in October 2008. It also welcomes the increased high-level EU-Belarus dialogue, including **bilateral contacts**, and the intensified technical cooperation initiated by the Commission, as a way of building mutual understanding and providing an opportunity to address the parties' concerns and issues of common interest.

Nevertheless, the Council continues to be concerned about the human rights situation in Belarus and the recent cases of violation in this area.

In order to encourage the adoption and implementation of further concrete measures towards democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the Council – while deciding to extend for one year from the date of the Council the restrictive measures provided for by Common Position 2006/276/CFSP, as extended by Common Position 2008/844/CFSP– has decided to maintain the suspension of the application of the travel restrictions imposed on certain officials of Belarus, in accordance with the terms set out in Council Common Position 2008/844/CFSP, for a nine months period. By the end of the nine months period, the Council will conduct an in-depth review of the restrictive measures taking into account the situation in Belarus, and provided that there are further positive developments, it will be ready to consider the possibility of lifting the restrictive measures.

At any time, the Council may decide to re-apply the travel restrictions if necessary, in the light of the actions of the Belarusian authorities in the sphere of democracy and human rights.

Lastly, the European Union remains ready to deepen its relations with Belarus **subject to progress made by Belarus** on the path towards democracy, human rights and rule of law and to assist Belarus in attaining these objectives. It underlines the importance of all the principles and commitments made by Belarus in the framework of the OSCE. The EU will intensify its cooperation with Belarusian civil society in order to support the development of a democratic and pluralist environment.