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**Mr Josep Borrell Fontelles**  
High Representative of the EU  
for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy  
Rue de la Loi 200  
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## Democracy in Belarus and beyond depends on the capacity of the EU to speak with one voice

Dear High Representative Borrell Fontelles,

In August 2020, freedom and democracy were once again stolen from Belarusians by dictator Alyaksandr Lukashenka. In response, they have been peacefully opposing the manipulations and brutality of the regime, while inspiring the rest of Europe with their perseverance. Belarusians are at the forefront of the global fight for human dignity, and other Europeans, many of them living in historically hard-won democracies, owe them all the support they can give.

So far, however, our collective record of helping Belarusians has been mixed. The EU needed a 'tip of the iceberg' case of state-led hijacking of the Ryanair flight FR4978 on 23 May 2021 to react decidedly against the regime that has been falsifying the results of elections, beating protesters and torturing political prisoners for nearly three decades. Moreover, the recent crisis on the EU-Belarusian border starkly exposes the weakness of the politically divided Union. Dictators like Lukashenka, Putin and Erdoğan cynically exploit the Union's weak external action and disjointed response to migration challenges, while also trying to compromise the EU and its members in the eyes of their citizens.

Allowing this to continuously happen, the Union is not only failing in the moral dimension, but also as a geopolitical actor. This is also the case in Afghanistan, with the umpteenth failure of NATO, the EU and UN to guarantee peace, resulting in mass migration to Europe. In the absence of a comprehensive strategy to such crises, the EU will keep being blackmailed by authoritarian governments.

The EU was born to overcome the constant state of war among nation states and to be an example of a new multilateral path to defend human rights, sustainable development, and international peace. This mission is continued in a multipolar world characterised by the progressive disengagement of the US and consolidation of often competing regional powers. Member States cannot address global phenomena and crises on their own: the dimension of the challenges require supranational solutions.

Offering a peaceful and mutually beneficial platform for political integration coupled with decisive sanctions against Lukashenka's regime should be a natural counterbalance to the Kremlin's authoritarian influence model in Belarus. At the same time, in the Middle East, Afghanistan and North Africa, we need a single voice to guarantee the stability and respect for human rights. **Until we have the capacity to impose swift and effective sanctions while also being able to receive and relocate asylum seekers across the EU in a humanitarian way, we will be susceptible to constant blackmail from undemocratic powers.**

Approximately three-quarters of European citizens support a common approach of the EU to foreign policy, security and defence, and migration (Eurobarometer 94, 2020/2021, pp. 80, 83, 63). The ongoing Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) is an opportunity to shape a stronger EU both in the moral and geopolitical dimension. To achieve that, we should **move towards qualified majority voting in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy as well as abandon the recent practice of unanimous voting on migration, which violates the Treaties.** We urge you to use the Conference on the Future of Europe Plenary as a venue for bringing about these changes, considering the needed **reform of the Treaties for the creation of a European Political Union capable of influencing international relations and protecting democratic values.**

Being able to react swiftly and decidedly as one democratic force will allow the EU to counter the violations of democratic principles and human rights, while reassuring Europeans fighting for democracy in Belarus and beyond that the Union offers them a way forward in contrast to undemocratic forces. **Democracy in Belarus and elsewhere relies on our European unity, which can be strengthened as a result of the Conference with your support.**

Yours sincerely,

**Leonie Martin**

President, JEF Europe

**Matteo Gori**

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