



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 16 February 2010
A 19/10

Statement by HR Ashton on the situation of the Union of Poles in Belarus

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"I am disappointed by the recent arrests of 40 members of the Union of Poles and other civil society representatives in Belarus, including that of the democratically elected chairperson of the Union of Poles, Ms Angelika Borys. I am also deeply concerned over the recent high fine imposed on Ms Borys. I condemn police action against the Union of Poles and what appear to be attempts by the authorities to impose a new leadership on the Polish community.

The European Union has demonstrated considerable openness to engagement with Belarus, seen also in Belarus' inclusion in the Eastern Partnership. The success of this engagement is conditional on steps towards democratisation and upholding human rights, including minority rights, taken by the government of Belarus. In this context, it is of utmost importance that Belarus abides by its OSCE and international commitments in terms of the protection and promotion of the rights of its minorities. These developments undermine our efforts to strengthen relations between the European Union and Belarus.

I will continue to follow the situation in Belarus closely."

P R E S S

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Lutz Guellner - Spokesperson for the High Representative
+32 498/964 641 - +32 2 296 46 41 e-mail: COMM-SPP-HRVP-ASHTON@ec.europa.eu
www.eeas.europa.eu