

Brussels, 21 August 2008

**Benita Ferrero-Waldner today welcomes the release of Andrei Kim and Sergei Parsyukevich, two Belarusian political prisoners.**

***Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, said:***

*"I am delighted by this news. The freeing of Andrei Kim and Sergei Parsyukevich, taken together with the recent release of Alyaksandr Kazulin are encouraging signs. The European Union has repeatedly called for the release of all political prisoners and for Belarus to take steps towards compliance with core European values of democracy, human rights and respect for rule of law.*

*This news comes at a critical time as Belarus prepares for parliamentary elections next month. I very much hope the positive momentum will continue and allow the European Union and Belarus to rapidly develop closer relations".*