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To all MEPs signatory to the letter on the High Representative/Vice President's visit to Moscow

Dear Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

I decided to conduct a visit to Russia at this particular juncture, in order to convey, inter alia, firm and clear messages regarding the sentencing of Alexei Navalny and the suppression of protests in his support. During my meeting with Minister Lavrov, I called for Mr Navalny's immediate and unconditional release, as well as of all those arbitrarily detained in connection with his return to Russia. I also stressed the need for the Russian authorities to conduct a swift, impartial and transparent investigation into his poisoning.

Ahead of and during my mission to Russia, my team maintained contacts with Mr Navalny's close circle to convey the EU's support. I also conveyed to my Russian counterpart, Minister Lavrov, my request for a meeting with Mr Navalny, who advised that such a request be addressed to the court. A senior member of my delegation met with Mr Navalny's lawyer in Moscow.

In a context where Russia is drifting towards an authoritarian state and away from Europe, the unity of intent in the EU and its Member States is clear and was demonstrated during our last Foreign Affairs Council, on 22 February, where we reached a political agreement to impose restrictive measures against authorities responsible for Mr Navalny's arrest, sentencing and persecution. We will also continue our support to all those engaged in the country in defending the fundamental political and civil freedoms. These decisions were framed in a wider strategic debate on how EU-Russia relations could develop within the framework of the five guiding principles and within a threefold approach: pushing back on infringements of international law and human rights, containing disinformation and cyberattacks and, of course, engaging on issues of interest to the EU.

I am convinced that diplomatic channels need to remain open, not only to de-escalate crises or incidents, but to hold direct exchanges, deliver firm and frank messages, all the more so when relations are far from satisfactory.

Yours faithfully,



Josep Borrell Fontelles