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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 10.11.2008
COM(2008) 729 final

2008/0210 (ACC)

Proposal for a

COUNCIL DECISION

on the signing and the provisional application of an Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters between the European Community and the Republic of Belarus amending the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Belarus on trade in textile products

(presented by the Commission)

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EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL

Grounds for and objectives of the proposal

The bilateral agreement on trade in textile products between the European Community and the Republic of Belarus will expire on 31 December 2008. The proposal provides for a one year extension of the present textiles agreement until 31 December 2009, elimination of 13 quotas that have been very little used in the preceding years and increase of the quota for one product category (flax yarns). Quotas for outward processing are increased at the standard yearly rate. This will reduce to 21 the textiles categories that will be subject to quotas from 1 January 2009.

In addition, the tariff commitments of Belarus *vis-à-vis* the EU have been reviewed. From 2009, Belarus will apply lower tariff rates for 4 tariff lines, and higher tariff rates for second hand textiles (3 tariff lines).

Within the framework provided by the negotiating directives, for the sake of administrative economy the Commission proposed to Belarus to extend the Agreement for two years. Belarus, however, did not accept to proceed to an extension beyond 2009.

General context

The bilateral agreement regulating trade in textiles with the Republic of Belarus, initialled on 1 April 1993, has not been signed nor ratified by Belarus so far. It has been continuously applied *de facto*, however, since 1993 and it has been amended on several occasions. The current version of this agreement includes tariff commitments on the side of the Republic of Belarus (tariffs largely similar to EU levels) and a snapback clause in case of the non-respect of those tariff levels. Quantitative restrictions will be maintained for 21 textiles and clothing categories.

In the absence of this arrangement, the Republic of Belarus may increase its import duties and introduce other import restrictions, to the detriment of EU exports.

Existing provisions in the area of the proposal

OJ L 123, 17.5.1994, p. 1., OJ L 94, 26.4.1995, p.44, OJ L 81, 30.3.1996, OJ L 336, 29.12.1999, p. 26., OJ L 345, 31.12.2003, p. 150., OJ L 72, 18.3.2005, p. 18., OJ L 345, 28.12.2005, p. 21., OJ L 384, 29.12.2006, p. 98, OJ L 337, 21.12.2007, p. 113.

Consistency with the other policies and objectives of the Union

In view of the recent political developments and following the conclusions of the General Affairs and External Relations Council of 13 October 2008, the proposed amendment offers a partial liberalisation of the applied regime and achieves a certain improvement of the EC's access to the Belarusian market for textiles.

CONSULTATION OF INTERESTED PARTIES AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Consultation of interested parties

This Decision provides for the signature and the provisional application of an international trade agreement amending an agreement that otherwise would have expired. No formal consultation is necessary.

Collection and use of expertise

There was no need for external expertise.

Impact assessment

Impacts have been assessed in the course of the negotiations of the international agreement.

It was therefore not necessary to conduct an impact assessment of this measure.

LEGAL ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSAL

Summary of the proposed action

The proposal provides for an extension of the present textiles agreement until 31 December 2009

There will be no particular negative effects or risks for developing countries.

Legal basis

Article 133 of the Treaty establishing the EC.

Subsidiarity principle

The proposal falls under the exclusive competence of the Community. The subsidiarity principle therefore does not apply.

Choice of instruments

Proposed instruments: decision.

The confirmation of the practice followed in previous years appears to be the most efficient way of revising and maintaining measures applicable to trade in textile products with Belarus.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATION

The proposal has no implication for the Community budget.

Proposal for a

COUNCIL DECISION

on the signing and the provisional application of an Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters between the European Community and the Republic of Belarus amending the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Belarus on trade in textile products

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 133 in conjunction with Article 300(2), first sentence thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Whereas:

- (1) The Commission has negotiated on behalf of the Community an Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters to extend for one year the existing Agreement and Protocols on trade in textile products with the Republic of Belarus, with some adjustments of the quantitative limits.
- (2) The Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters should be applied on a provisional basis as of 1 January 2009, pending the completion of procedures required for its conclusion, subject to reciprocal provisional application by the Republic of Belarus.
- (3) The Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters should be signed on behalf of the Community,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

Subject to its possible conclusion at a later date, the President of the Council is hereby authorised to designate the person(s) empowered to sign on behalf of the Community the Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters between the European Community and the Republic of Belarus amending the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Belarus on trade in textile products initialled on 1 April 1993, as last amended and extended by the agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters initialled on 19 October 2007.

Article 2

Subject to reciprocity, the Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters shall be applied on a provisional basis from 1 January 2009, pending its formal conclusion.

The text of the agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters is attached to this Decision.

Article 3

1. If the Republic of Belarus fails to respect paragraph 2.4 of the Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters, the quota for 2009 will be reduced to the levels applicable in 2008.
2. The decision to implement paragraph 1 shall be taken in accordance with the procedures referred to in Article 17 of Council Regulation (EEC) No 3030/93 of 12 October 1993 on common rules for imports of certain textile products from third countries¹.

Article 4

This Decision shall be published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

It shall enter into force on the day following its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

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Done at Brussels,

*For the Council
The President*

¹ OJ L 275, 8.11.1993, p. 1.

AGREEMENT in the form of an Exchange of Letters between the European Community and the Republic of Belarus amending the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Belarus on trade in textile products

A. Letter from the Council of the European Union

Sir,

1. I have the honour to refer to the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Belarus on trade in textile products initialled on 1 April 1993, as last amended and extended by the Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters initialled on 19 October 2007 (hereafter referred to as the 'Agreement').
2. In view of the expiry of the Agreement on 31 December 2008 and in accordance with Article 19(1) of the Agreement, the European Community and the Republic of Belarus agree to extend the duration of the Agreement, for a further period of one year, subject to the following amendments and conditions:

- 2.1. The text of Article 19(1) of the Agreement shall read as follows:

'This Agreement shall enter into force on the first day of the month following the date on which the Parties notify each other of the completion of the procedures necessary for that purpose. It shall be applicable until 31 December 2009.'

- 2.2. Annex II which sets out the quantitative restrictions for exports from the Republic of Belarus to the European Community is replaced by Appendix 1 to this Letter.
 - 2.3. The Annex to Protocol C which sets out the quantitative restrictions for exports from the Republic of Belarus to the European Community after OPT operations in the Republic of Belarus is replaced for the period of 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009 by Appendix 2 to this letter.
 - 2.4. Imports into Belarus of textile and clothing products of European Community origin shall be subject in 2009 to custom duties not exceeding those provided for the year 2003 in Appendix 4 of the Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters between the European Community and the Republic of Belarus initialled on 11 November 1999, which is amended by Appendix 3 to this letter. The amendment concerns only tariff lines 540772, 56060010, 590500, 590691, 630900, 631010 and 631090. In 2009, tariffs applied by Belarus for these products will be as follows: 540772 – 4%, 56060010 – 0%, 590500 – 4%, 590691 – 0%, 630900 – 20%, 631010 – 20%, 631090 – 20%.

In the case of non-application of these rates the Community will have the right to reintroduce for the period of the Agreement remaining unexpired on a pro rata basis the levels for quantitative restrictions applicable for 2008 as specified in the Exchange of Letters initialled on 19 October 2007.

3. The European Community and Belarus recall their agreement to enter into consultations not later than six months before the expiration of the present Agreement with a view to possibly concluding a new agreement.
4. Should the Republic of Belarus become a Member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) before the date of the expiry of the Agreement, the agreements and rules of the WTO shall be applied from the date of the Republic of Belarus' accession to the WTO.
5. I should be obliged if you could kindly confirm the acceptance of your Government of the foregoing. Should this be the case, this Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters shall enter into force on the first day of the month following the day on which the Parties have notified each other that the legal procedures necessary to this end have been completed. In the meantime, it shall be applied provisionally from 1 January 2009 on the condition of reciprocity.

Please accept, Sir, the assurance of my highest consideration.

For the European Community

Appendix 1

'Annex II

Belarus	Category	unit	Quota as from 1 January 09
Group IA	1	tonnes	1 586
	2	tonnes	6 643
	3	tonnes	242
Group IB	4	T pieces	1 839
	5	T pieces	1 105
	6	T pieces	1 705
	7	T pieces	1 377
	8	T pieces	1 160
Group IIA	20	tonnes	329
	22	tonnes	524
Group IIB	15	T pieces	1 726
	21	T pieces	930
	24	T pieces	844
	26/27	T pieces	1 117
	29	T pieces	468
	73	T pieces	329
Group IIIB	67	tonnes	359
Group IV	115	tonnes	420
	117	tonnes	2 312
	118	tonnes	471

T pieces: thousand of pieces

Appendix 2

Annex to Protocol C

Category	Unit	As from 1 January 2009
4	1 000 pieces	6 610
5	1 000 pieces	9 215
6	1 000 pieces	12 290
7	1 000 pieces	9 225
8	1 000 pieces	3 140
12	1 000 pairs	6 210
15	1 000 pieces	5 387
21	1 000 pieces	3 584
24	1 000 pieces	922
26/27	1 000 pieces	4 492
29	1 000 pieces	1 820
73	1 000 pieces	6 979
83	Tonnes	927

Appendix 3

'Appendix 4

Maximum rates of duties applicable for imports into the Republic of Belarus of textile products from the European Community

CN code	Rate of duty %				
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2009
5001 00	4	4	4	4	4
5002 00	4	4	4	4	4
5003 10	4	4	4	4	4
5003 90	4	4	4	4	4
5004 00	4	4	4	4	4
5005 00	4	4	4	4	4
5006 00	4	4	4	4	4
5007 10	4	4	4	4	4
5007 20	4	4	4	4	4
5007 90	4	4	4	4	4
5101 11	4	4	4	4	4
5101 19	4	4	4	4	4
5101 21	4	4	4	4	4
5101 29	4	4	4	4	4
5101 30	4	4	4	4	4
5102 10	4	4	4	4	4
5102 20	4	4	4	4	4
5103 10	4	4	4	4	4
5103 20	4	4	4	4	4
5103 30	4	4	4	4	4
5104 00	4	4	4	4	4
5105 10	4	4	4	4	4
5105 21	4	4	4	4	4
5105 29	4	4	4	4	4
5105 30	4	4	4	4	4
5105 40	4	4	4	4	4
5106 10	4	4	4	4	4

5106 20	4	4	4	4	4
5107 10	4	4	4	4	4
5107 20	4	4	4	4	4
5108 10	4	4	4	4	4
5108 20	4	4	4	4	4
5109 10	4	4	4	4	4
5109 90	4	4	4	4	4
5110 00	4	4	4	4	4
5111 11	15	12	10	8	8
5111 19	15	12	10	8	8
5111 20	15	12	10	8	8
5111 30	15	12	10	8	8
5111 90	15	12	10	8	8
5112 11	15	12	10	8	8
5112 19	15	12	10	8	8
5112 20	15	12	10	8	8
5112 30	15	12	10	8	8
5112 90	15	12	10	8	8
5113 00	0	0	0	0	0
5201 00	0	0	0	0	0
5202 10	0	0	0	0	0
5202 91	0	0	0	0	0
5202 99	0	0	0	0	0
5203 00	0	0	0	0	0
5204 11	5	5	5	4	4
5204 19	5	5	5	4	4
5204 20	5	5	5	4	4
5205 11	5	5	5	4	4
5205 12	5	5	5	4	4
5205 13	5	5	5	4	4
5205 14	5	5	5	4	4
5205 15	5	5	5	4	4
5205 21	5	5	5	4	4

5205 22	5	5	5	4	4
5205 23	5	5	5	4	4
5205 24	5	5	5	4	4
5205 25	5	5	5	4	4
5205 26	5	5	5	4	4
5205 27	5	5	5	4	4
5205 28	5	5	5	4	4
5205 31	5	5	5	4	4
5205 32	5	5	5	4	4
5205 33	5	5	5	4	4
5205 34	5	5	5	4	4
5205 35	5	5	5	4	4
5205 41	5	5	5	4	4
5205 42	5	5	5	4	4
5205 43	5	5	5	4	4
5205 44	5	5	5	4	4
5205 45	5	5	5	4	4
5205 46	5	5	5	4	4
5205 47	5	5	5	4	4
5205 48	5	5	5	4	4
5206 11	5	5	5	4	4
5206 12	5	5	5	4	4
5206 13	5	5	5	4	4
5206 14	5	5	5	4	4
5206 15	5	5	5	4	4
5206 21	5	5	5	4	4
5206 22	5	5	5	4	4
5206 23	5	5	5	4	4
5206 24	5	5	5	4	4
5206 25	5	5	5	4	4
5206 31	5	5	5	4	4
5206 32	5	5	5	4	4
5206 33	5	5	5	4	4
5206 34	5	5	5	4	4

5206 35	5	5	5	4	4
5206 41	5	5	5	4	4
5206 42	5	5	5	4	4
5206 43	5	5	5	4	4
5206 44	5	5	5	4	4
5206 45	5	5	5	4	4
5207 10	5	5	5	4	4
5207 90	5	5	5	4	4
5208 11	14	12	10	8	8
5208 12	14	12	10	8	8
5208 13	14	12	10	8	8
5208 19	14	12	10	8	8
5208 21	14	12	10	8	8
5208 22	14	12	10	8	8
5208 23	14	12	10	8	8
5208 29	14	12	10	8	8
5208 31	14	12	10	8	8
5208 32	14	12	10	8	8
5208 33	14	12	10	8	8
5208 39	14	12	10	8	8
5208 41	14	12	10	8	8
5208 42	14	12	10	8	8
5208 43	14	12	10	8	8
5208 49	14	12	10	8	8
5208 51	14	12	10	8	8
5208 52	14	12	10	8	8
5208 53	14	12	10	8	8
5208 59	14	12	10	8	8
5209 11	14	12	10	8	8
5209 12	14	12	10	8	8
5209 19	14	12	10	8	8
5209 21	14	12	10	8	8
5209 22	14	12	10	8	8
5209 29	14	12	10	8	8

5209 31	14	12	10	8	8
5209 32	14	12	10	8	8
5209 39	14	12	10	8	8
5209 41	14	12	10	8	8
5209 42	14	12	10	8	8
5209 43	14	12	10	8	8
5209 49	14	12	10	8	8
5209 51	14	12	10	8	8
5209 52	14	12	10	8	8
5209 59	14	12	10	8	8
5210 11	14	12	10	8	8
5210 12	14	12	10	8	8
5210 19	14	12	10	8	8
5210 21	14	12	10	8	8
5210 22	14	12	10	8	8
5210 29	14	12	10	8	8
5210 31	14	12	10	8	8
5210 32	14	12	10	8	8
5210 39	15	12	10	8	8
5210 41	14	12	10	8	8
5210 42	14	12	10	8	8
5210 49	14	12	10	8	8
5210 51	14	12	10	8	8
5210 52	14	12	10	8	8
5210 59	14	12	10	8	8
5211 11	14	12	10	8	8
5211 12	14	12	10	8	8
5211 19	14	12	10	8	8
5211 21	14	12	10	8	8
5211 22	14	12	10	8	8
5211 29	14	12	10	8	8
5211 31	14	12	10	8	8
5211 32	14	12	10	8	8
5211 39	14	12	10	8	8

5211 41	15	12	10	8	8
5211 42	14	12	10	8	8
5211 43	14	12	10	8	8
5211 49	14	12	10	8	8
5211 51	15	12	10	8	8
5211 52	14	12	10	8	8
5211 59	14	12	10	8	8
5212 11	14	12	10	8	8
5212 12	14	12	10	8	8
5212 13	14	12	10	8	8
5212 14	14	12	10	8	8
5212 15	14	12	10	8	8
5212 21	14	12	10	8	8
5212 22	14	12	10	8	8
5212 23	14	12	10	8	8
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5212 25	14	12	10	8	8
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5301 21	4	4	4	4	4
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5305 21	4	4	4	4	4
5305 29	4	4	4	4	4
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5306 20	5	5	5	4	4
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5308 20	4	4	4	4	4
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5309 21	9	9	8	8	8
5309 29	9	9	8	8	8
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5310 90	9	9	8	8	8
5311 00	9	9	8	8	8
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5401 20	4	4	4	4	4
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5402 32	10	10	10	10	10
5402 33	10	10	10	10	10
5402 39	10	10	10	10	10
5402 41	0	0	0	0	0
5402 42	0	0	0	0	0
5402 43	10	10	10	10	10
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5402 51	0	0	0	0	0
5402 52	10	10	10	10	10
5402 59	0	0	0	0	0
5402 61	0	0	0	0	0
5402 62	0	0	0	0	0
5402 69	0	0	0	0	0
5403 10	4	4	4	4	4
5403 20	4	4	4	4	4
5403 31	10	10	10	10	10

5403 32	4	4	4	4	4
5403 33	4	4	4	4	4
5403 39	4	4	4	4	4
5403 41	4	4	4	4	4
5403 42	4	4	4	4	4
5403 49	4	4	4	4	4
5404 10	5	5	5	5	5
5404 90	5	4	4	4	4
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5406 10	4	4	4	4	4
5406 20	4	4	4	4	4
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5408 24	9	8	8	8	8
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5408 32	9	8	8	8	8
5408 33	9	8	8	8	8
5408 34	9	8	8	8	8
5501 10	4	4	4	4	4
5501 20	5	5	5	5	5
5501 30	5	5	5	5	5
5501 90	4	4	4	4	4
5502 00	4	4	4	4	4
5503 10	0	0	0	0	0
5503 20	0	0	0	0	0
5503 30	5	5	5	5	5
5503 40	0	0	0	0	0
5503 90	0	0	0	0	0
5504 10	4	4	4	4	4
5504 90	4	4	4	4	4
5505 10	5	5	5	5	5
5505 20	5	5	5	5	5
5506 10	4	4	4	4	4
5506 20	4	4	4	4	4
5506 30	4	4	4	4	4
5506 90	4	4	4	4	4
5507 00	4	4	4	4	4
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5509 52	5	5	5	4	4
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5509 69	5	5	5	4	4
5509 91	5	5	5	4	4
5509 92	5	5	5	4	4
5509 99	5	5	5	4	4
5510 11	5	5	5	4	4
5510 12	5	5	5	4	4
5510 20	5	5	5	4	4
5510 30	5	5	5	4	4
5510 90	5	5	5	4	4
5511 10	5	5	5	4	4
5511 20	5	5	5	4	4
5511 30	5	5	5	4	4
5512 11	9	8	8	8	8
5512 19	9	8	8	8	8
5512 21	9	8	8	8	8
5512 29	9	8	8	8	8
5512 91	9	8	8	8	8
5512 99	9	8	8	8	8
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5513 33	9	9	8	8	8
5513 39	9	9	8	8	8
5513 41	9	9	8	8	8
5513 42	9	9	8	8	8
5513 43	9	8	8	8	8
5513 49	9	8	8	8	8
5514 11	9	9	8	8	8
5514 12	9	8	8	8	8
5514 13	9	9	8	8	8
5514 19	9	9	8	8	8
5514 21	9	9	8	8	8
5514 22	9	9	8	8	8
5514 23	9	9	8	8	8
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B. Letter from the Government of the Republic of Belarus

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of which reads as follows:

“ Sir,

1. I have the honour to refer to the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Belarus on trade in textile products initialled on 1 April 1993, as last amended and extended by the Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters initialled on 19 October 2007 (hereafter referred to as the 'Agreement').
2. In view of the expiry of the Agreement on 31 December 2008 and in accordance with Article 19(1) of the Agreement, the European Community and the Republic of Belarus agree to extend the duration of the Agreement, for a further period of one year, subject to the following amendments and conditions:
 - 2.1. The text of Article 19(1) of the Agreement shall read as follows:

'This Agreement shall enter into force on the first day of the month following the date on which the Parties notify each other of the completion of the procedures necessary for that purpose. It shall be applicable until 31 December 2009.'
 - 2.2. Annex II which sets out the quantitative restrictions for exports from the Republic of Belarus to the European Community is replaced by Appendix 1 to this Letter.
 - 2.3. The Annex to Protocol C which sets out the quantitative restrictions for exports from the Republic of Belarus to the European Community after OPT operations in the Republic of Belarus is replaced for the period of 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009 by Appendix 2 to this Letter.
 - 2.4. Imports into Belarus of textile and clothing products of European Community origin shall be subject in 2009 to custom duties not exceeding those provided for the year 2003 in Appendix 4 of the Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters between the European Community and the Republic of Belarus initialled on 11 November 1999, which is amended by Appendix 3 to this letter. The amendment concerns only tariff lines 540772, 56060010, 590500, 590691, 630900, 631010 and 631090. In 2009, tariffs applied by Belarus for these products will be as follows: 540772 – 4%, 56060010 – 0%, 590500 – 4%, 590691 – 0%, 630900 – 20%, 631010 – 20%, 631090 – 20%.

In the case of non-application of these rates the Community will have the right to reintroduce for the period of the Agreement remaining unexpired on a pro rata basis the levels for quantitative restrictions applicable for 2008 as specified in the Exchange of Letters initialled on 19 October 2007.

3. The European Community and Belarus recall their agreement to enter into consultations not later than six months before the expiration of the present Agreement with a view to possibly concluding a new agreement.
4. Should the Republic of Belarus become a Member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) before the date of the expiry of the Agreement, the agreements and rules of the WTO shall be applied from the date of the Republic of Belarus' accession to the WTO.
5. I should be obliged if you could kindly confirm the acceptance of your Government of the foregoing. Should this be the case, this Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters shall enter into force on the first day of the month following the day on which the Parties have notified each other that the legal procedures necessary to this end have been completed. In the meantime, it shall be applied provisionally from 1 January 2009 on the condition of reciprocity.

Please accept, Sir, the assurance of my highest consideration."

I have the honour to confirm that my Government is in agreement with the content of your letter.

Please accept, Sir, the assurance of my highest consideration.

For the Government of the Republic of Belarus