Maxim Ryschenkow
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus
vul. Lenina 19
Minsk, 220030
**BELARUS**

Dear Foreign Minister

I am deeply concerned about the health and safety of the prisoner of conscience Maryia Kalesnikava (Maria Kolesnikova) and demand her immediate and unconditional release. The well-known opposition leader has been arbitrarily detained for almost five years because of her prominent role in the 2020 elections and the subsequent peaceful protests in Belarus.

Following her abduction-style arrest on 7 September 2020, on 6 September 2021 Maryia Kalesnikava was sentenced to 11 years in prison on false charges of "extremism", "trying to seize power" and "incitement to acts dangerous to the state." Maryia Kalesnikava is serving her sentence in female penal colony N4 in Homiel, where her health has significantly deteriorated. She suffers from a stomach ulcer and other illnesses that are rapidly progressing under the inhumane conditions there. Nevertheless, she is being denied the necessary medical care. She has been repeatedly targeted by the prison administration for alleged disciplinary infringements. For more than 600 days, she has not been allowed to receive calls, letters or visits from her family or legal counsel.

I urge you to ensure Maryia Kalesnikava’s immediate and unconditional release. Until then, please provide her with adequate health care and access to all essential services, including medication. As a Foreign Minister fostering the positive image of Belarus to the world at large it would therefore be pivotal to promote her release and most urgently provide medical care to restore her to health.

Yours sincerely