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EUROPEAN GREENS DELIGHTED THAT INGRID BETANCOURT IS FREE AND INTEND TO INVITE HER TO EGP COUNCIL IN PARIS

The Spokespersons of the European Green Party have expressed their joy and relief that **Ingrid Betancourt**, the former leader and presidential candidate of the **Colombian Green Party (Partido Verde-Oxigeno)**, has been freed after being held hostage by the FARC Guerrilla for more than 6 years.

EGP Co-Spokesperson Philippe Lamberts said: "It is wonderful news that Ingrid Betancourt has finally been freed. Along with the hundreds of other hostages that FARC has abducted over the years, she has endured an ordeal of unimaginable horror with strength and courage and has been a source of inspiration to millions of people. We have been deeply moved by her words of peace and hope on her return from captivity. We wish her all the best as she returns to the love of her family and friends and extend the same wishes to the 14 hostages that were freed at the same time. Since Ingrid was taken captive, along with her Presidential campaign manager, **Clara Rojas**, in February 2002, Greens throughout the world have played an active part in the campaign calling for their release and the release of all hostages and we will carry on as long as hostages are still being held in Colombia and elsewhere. The immediate release of the dozens of people still being held by FARC and an end to the murders and abductions carried out by rightwing paramilitaries must be the first step to a lasting peace in Colombia."

EGP Co-Spokesperson Ulrike Lunacek continued: "We very much look forward to being able to meet Ingrid Betancourt in person again after she has had time to recover and be with her family. At the Global Greens congress in Sao Paulo, Brazil in May of this year, Ingrid Betancourt was made Honorary President of the Global Greens; it is therefore natural that we will invite her to our EGP Council Meeting in Paris from October 10th to 12th 2008. We urge the Colombian President and the FARC to use the momentum created by this release to actively seek a political solution to the conflict in Colombia. Neither the status quo nor a military solution are an option, as the Colombian people have the right to live in a country free of the violence and poverty that they have had to endure for decades. This will require a process which gives all victims of the conflict access to truth, justice and reparation as this is a prerequisite for a



lasting reconciliation. The Colombian government as well as the FARC should accept the offer to mediate in negotiations which has been made by well respected groups including the Catholic Church and indigenous communities in Florida and La Pradera so that a political solution to the conflict can be found. We are convinced that Ingrid Betancourt will be able to contribute to efforts to bring peace and social justice to Colombia as she did before she was so cruelly abducted."
