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EUROPEAN GREENS CRITICISE EU LEADERS ATTENDING BEIJING OLYMPICS OPENING CEREMONY

The Spokespersons of the European Green Party have criticised the leaders of EU Member States who are due to attend the opening ceremony on 8th August 2008.

EGP Co-Spokesperson Philippe Lamberts said: "We European Greens have, along with many human rights organisations, called for heads of state and government from the EU and elsewhere to stay away from the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, unless meaningful progress had been made regarding Tibet and the human rights situation in China generally. Unfortunately, no significant progress has been made and indeed the run-up to the Olympics has seen the Chinese authorities tighten restrictions on the media and to continue to detain human rights' activists. That is why we condemn in the strongest possible terms the decision by several EU leaders to attend the opening ceremony, thereby contributing in giving a political dimension to what should remain a sports event."

EGP Co-Spokesperson Ulrike Lunacek continued: "These leaders have missed a perfect opportunity to send a powerful message that the international community will not accept continuing human rights abuses in China. These leaders' presence at the opening ceremony will be presented as an unspoken, but no less real endorsement of their repressive policies and sends out the message that EU countries value the potential profits offered by the Chinese markets more than the human rights of Chinese citizens. The very least that those EU leaders who have decided to attend the opening ceremony should do is to speak out publicly against the detention of human rights activists and the stale-mate in the negotiations with Tibetan leaders while they are in China."
