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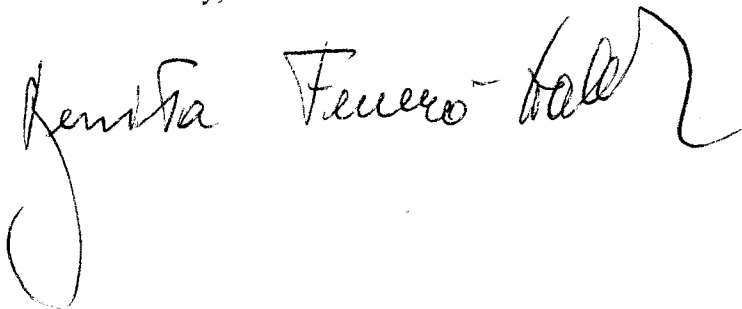
Brussels, 24 March 2006
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Dear Mrs Lucas,

Thank you for your letter of 9 February concerning the religious minorities, notably Hindus, in Russia. May I first express my apologies for the delay in replying to you. Let me also say that we have taken very good note of concerns you raise of which we are indeed aware. The Commission's Moscow Delegation is closely monitoring developments with regard to these issues.

The EU's regular human rights consultations with Russia provide a framework for discussing the full range of human rights issues. Combating racism and intolerance is and will remain high on our agenda. In this context, Russia was invited, on the occasion of the last round of consultations on 3 March, to visit the EU Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia in order to develop a dialogue on best practices in this area.

Yours sincerely,



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