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Delegation of Belarus

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALYAKSANDR SYCHOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS
TO THE OSCE, AT THE MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 February 2011

**Regarding the restrictions imposed on Belarus by the European Union and
the United States of America**

Mr. Chairperson,

We listened attentively to the statements by the delegations of the European Union, the United States, Norway and the Russian Federation regarding the restrictions imposed on Belarus. The statements will be sent to Minsk for analysis and scrutiny.

In this context, we should like to draw your attention to the relevant statements by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, which contain an assessment and commentaries by Belarus on this matter. Our delegation has distributed those statements within the OSCE.

In particular, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus expressed deep regret over the Conclusions of the Council of the European Union of 31 January 2011 in relation to Belarus. The Belarusian side takes the view that, and I quote, “at the core of this decision is the flagrant “blind eye” policy vis-à-vis the aggressive actions and violence initiated by the demonstrators, manifested in the attempt to take over the seat of the Government and the Parliament of the Republic of Belarus on 19 December 2010 following the presidential elections. [Our delegation has informed the Permanent Council in detail of these events]. The selective and biased interpretation in the Council Conclusions of the findings of the international election observation in Belarus is meant to disregard the clearly expressed will of the Belarusian people.

Neither of the two notions can change the objective facts.

Such an attitude cannot produce the right outcome.

The logic behind the Council’s Conclusions paves the way for the EU’s direct interference in the affairs of a sovereign State. It undermines trust and inevitably leads to actions detrimental to the ambition of shaping a Europe free of dividing lines. By creating artificial obstacles to inter-State co-operation, the European Union is depriving itself of the

possibility to contribute in a constructive manner to social transformations in Belarus. The blatant attempt by a section of the opposition forces to justify violations of the law which endangered the public actually appears to be the promotion of lawlessness and extremism from the outside. This practice prevents public organizations from developing a responsible civic position based on national interests.

This is hardly in accord with the officially proclaimed goals of the European Union.

We are particularly displeased that the EU response is completely out of proportion when compared with the far tougher actions of the governments of some other States of the European region [I mentioned this during the Permanent Council meeting last week]. Such obvious double standards render the EU rhetoric about “European values” meaningless.

Tension in our relations with the European Union is not our choice. Nevertheless, the Council’s Conclusions compel the Republic of Belarus to take proportional and appropriate measures with a view to strengthening the sovereignty of Belarus and safeguarding the stability and consolidation of Belarusian society.

We call on the European Union to renounce its logic of confrontation and ill-advised attempts to destroy the constructive elements of our mutual relations, which we have been painstakingly shaping through our joint efforts and to which there is no reasonable alternative.

Belarus will continue moving consistently towards the progressive modernization and reform of public institutions, the development of a social dialogue and a civil society in line with the country’s needs.

The pressure on Belarus cannot but fail. Joint efforts to overcome the current difficulties in relations with the EU which have arisen through no fault of the Belarusian authorities are in our mutual interest and in the interest of European unity in the face of new threats and challenges.

We favour a stronger partnership with the EU, an open, honest and respectful dialogue and equal co-operation without discrimination and ‘double standards’”. End of quote.

Mr. Chairperson,

Belarus has responded to the introduction of restrictions by the United States of America with similar incomprehension and regret.

The relevant commentary by the Belarusian Foreign Ministry states that “the United States Government’s decision to introduce restrictions in respect of the Republic of Belarus [is] an unwarranted and unjustified move. The decision brings tension and distrust back to our bilateral relations”.

Furthermore, “Washington’s decision openly violates the United States commitment to refrain from a policy of economic coercion against Belarus outlined in the Budapest Memorandum of 1994”.

The Foreign Ministry's statement points out that "pressure and coercion are absolutely futile".

Belarus reserves the right to take proportional reciprocal steps and, at the same time, "reiterates its genuine interest in maintaining constructive relations with the United States that serve the interests of both the Republic of Belarus and the United States".

Mr. Chairperson,

I pointed out at the Permanent Council meeting last week that any sanctions or restrictions in respect of a sovereign State directly contravene the Helsinki Final Act. I remind our colleagues from the European Union, the United States and Norway once again that in Helsinki in 1975 all participating States clearly and unambiguously undertook "in all circumstances [to] refrain from any ... act of military, or of political, economic or other coercion designed to subordinate to their own interest the exercise by another participating State of the rights inherent in its sovereignty and thus to secure advantages of any kind".

As we can clearly see today, those who advocate the observance of the principles and commitments of the OSCE more strongly than everyone else are the ones who violate them most flagrantly in practice.

There was another example of blatant interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign State at the so-called "Donors' Conference" on Belarus in Warsaw yesterday. How can such events be held without the participation of the official representatives of the country concerned and without taking its official position into account?

This measure is clearly provocative. The policy of "artificially nurturing" the civil society from outside while cut off from dialogue with the legitimate authorities is disastrous and dangerous.

What kind of building of trust and mutual understanding and what kind of good-neighbourly relations can there be in such a situation? This is a road that leads nowhere, not to the "security community" in the OSCE region which we agreed upon at the Summit in Astana, and which, judging by the actions of some of our partners, is hardly likely to eventuate in the foreseeable future.

In this context, we call on the European Union, the United States and Norway to review the erroneous decisions they have made and to resume a constructive and mutually respectful dialogue.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.