



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Freedom of Assembly and Ukrainian Detainees in Belarus

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 5, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States very much shares the concerns of the Ukrainian Delegation about the treatment of its citizens arrested in Belarus for participating in an apparently peaceful effort to present a petition on Chernobyl to Belarusian authorities.

The swift steps of the Belarusian riot police to shut down this protest action and the sentencing of a number of Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian participants are very regrettable.

The United States calls on Belarus to respect its commitment under paragraph nine of the Copenhagen Document to protect freedom of assembly. Belarus' severe restrictions on this fundamental freedom are not at all in keeping with international democratic standards.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.