



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement on the Parliamentary Elections and Detention of Ales Bialiatski in Belarus**

As delivered by Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Christopher Midura  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
October 15, 2012

The United States continues to be concerned about the human rights situation in Belarus, as witnessed most recently by the flawed September 23 parliamentary elections. The elections fell short of international standards, and their conduct cannot be considered free or fair. The preliminary assessment of the OSCE election observation mission was that the elections were “not competitive from the start.” The observer mission cited the limitation of choice for voters, the lack of impartiality on the part of the election commission, and the absence of a proper counting procedure.

The United States urges Belarus to take steps to meet its international commitments to hold genuinely democratic elections and to promote respect for human rights. Every flawed election is a missed opportunity for the people of Belarus.

The United States is also troubled by the continued imprisonment and harsh treatment of human rights advocate Ales Bialiatski. On September 25, his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Department of State awarded Bialiatski its 2011 Human Rights Defenders Award in a ceremony in Warsaw attended by his wife. On that very day, we learned that Bialiatski was placed in a solitary punishment cell. The United States is concerned by the apparent coincidence between receipt of that award and his worsening treatment by Belarus authorities.

We renew our call on the Government of Belarus to begin immediately to honor its OSCE commitments, release all political prisoners unconditionally and without delay, and ensure their full rehabilitation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.