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**STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

10 March 2011

**Regarding the statement by the representative of the
United States of America on freedom of religion in Russia**

Mr. Chairperson,

In accordance with the right of reply, I should like to dwell briefly on the written version of the statement by the distinguished representative of the United States of America, which contains a passage on freedom of religion in Russia. As was noted in the actual text that was circulated, the examples cited in relation to our country were taken from last year's State Department report, on which Russia already commented after its publication. For this reason, I see no point in returning to a detailed "exchange of courtesies" on this subject.

I shall recall in a few words our position on the question under consideration. For Russia, as a multi-ethnic State, the question of promoting tolerance, freedom of belief and respect for the traditional values of different religions is and remains a central priority – the subject of close study, monitoring and painstaking day-to-day work. It is evident that the key to achieving progress in this field is respect on the part of the State for its own citizens, for people as individuals, for ensuring their rights and freedoms, and not the assessments of outside observers.

As everyone knows, and as our American partners themselves recognize, in terms of ensuring human rights, ideal States simply do not exist. There are matters to reproach us for in our own country; there are matters for the United States to reflect on, as well as other countries, whether to the east or the west of Vienna. Well, then, let us not only point out isolated flaws to one another, but also exchange "best practices" on this subject. Let us turn the work in this area into something positive. But this is an idea for the future – changing awareness is not so simple.

For now I should like, by way of "humanitarian assistance", to suggest to our American partners what they should pay attention to in terms of ensuring freedom of religion in their own country. I think this will be useful.

For example, according to an opinion poll conducted by *Time* magazine, 43 per cent of Americans have a negative attitude towards Muslims, and 25 per cent believe that the

majority of Muslims living in the United States are not patriots of that country. This is a dangerous statistic.

Here is another example. The American Civil Liberties Union, a non-governmental organization, released a report in June 2009 criticizing the continuing widespread practice in the United States of racial and ethnic harassment of Arabs, Muslims and immigrants from South Asia and Latin America by law enforcement agencies. The investigation draws attention to the inadequacy of the instructions drawn up by the United States Department of Justice in 2003 for federal law enforcement agencies on racial issues. In particular, these instructions do not take into account such important factors as profiling on religious and national grounds, and they contain very broad exceptions to the principle of non-discrimination in cases involving the national security and territorial integrity of the United States.

It seems to me that it would be worthwhile for the United States Government to pay greater attention to preventive efforts among the public in order to turn around the growing negative tendencies there towards intolerance vis-à-vis representatives of different religions and beliefs. We should be glad to hear what is being done or planned by the United States federal authorities to improve the situation. This will be helpful to everyone.

Thank you for your attention.