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Delegation of Belarus

**STATEMENT BY MR. VALERY VORONETSKY,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS
TO THE OSCE, AT THE 907th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

29 March 2012

**Regarding the regular report by Ms. Dunja Mijatović,
OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome to today's meeting of the Permanent Council Ms. Dunja Mijatović, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, and thank her for her latest regular report.

We note the Representative's active and systematic work on the question of freedom of the media and the Internet during the period covered by the report. It is gratifying that the work of the Representative's Office deals with a variety of issues and that the focus of its attention is not limited to the countries located "to the east of Vienna". As is evident from Ms. Mijatović's report, there are problems regarding freedom of the media in the majority of OSCE participating States.

We are pleased that the Representative's Office has shown concern regarding the intention of European Union countries to join the international Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), which is ambiguous from the point of view of human rights and media freedom, and also regarding a number of restrictive draft laws in the United States of America dealing with this area. Our delegation has already raised both these issues within the Permanent Council.

We should also like to draw attention to several disturbing trends in Canada, trends that for some reason or other have not yet come to the attention of Ms. Mijatović's Office. I am referring here to the information that has appeared to the effect that the Canadian Government intends to introduce amendments to a number of laws that will have a direct effect on the operation of the Internet. This refers in particular to the draft law entitled An Act to enact the Investigating and Preventing Criminal Electronic Communications Act and to amend the Criminal Code and other Acts.

The most controversial provisions of the proposed legislation, in the view of experts, will allow the police and national security services of Canada to compel telecommunications companies to support technologies necessary for the real-time interception of Internet

communications, and to require of Internet providers that they make available, without a court order, information on subscribers, including their names, telephone numbers and IP addresses.

In our view, the Representative's Office might study this information in a more detailed manner and present its findings to the Permanent Council.

Mr. Chairperson,

The written report by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media contains interesting information on the Office's collaboration with a whole number of participating States. This information will be carefully studied and analysed in Minsk.

As regards the section dealing with Belarus, the issues raised in that section have already been discussed in the Permanent Council. There has also been an exchange of correspondence on these questions between our delegation and the Office of the Representative, which is an indication of the continuing dialogue and the open and constructive position taken by the Belarusian side in co-operation with the OSCE.

We cannot but take advantage of today's opportunity to also recall that a number of Belarusian journalists continue unjustifiably to suffer the effects of European Union visa sanctions. This situation is totally unacceptable from the point of view of freedom of the media and runs counter to OSCE commitments.

We should also like to enquire into Ms. Mijatović's opinion regarding the inclusion of one of the Belarusian Internet providers (*Delovaya set'*) in the European Union sanctions list of 23 March of this year.

Mr. Chairperson,

In conclusion, we should like to note that, despite the sensitive nature of the subject of media, we are prepared to engage in a frank dialogue on this problem area. In this connection, we believe that a discussion of this kind must cover a range of issues in a balanced way, taking into account various aspects having to do with freedom of the media. One must not forget that the reason for being, the *raison d'être* of our Organization is to ensure security through the development of co-operation. For that reason, the examination of specific issues and questions within the OSCE must be approached from precisely that point of view.

Allow me to wish Ms. Mijatović and her Office every success in their future work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.