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

16 June 2011

**Regarding the human rights situation in the United States of America**

Mr. Chairperson,

We continue to be seriously concerned about the human rights situation in the United States of America.

In recent times, questions about the observance of human rights in the United States have been raised in the Permanent Council on many occasions. Unfortunately, however, it is our view that the delegation of the United States of America did not respond appropriately to the concerns expressed. Our American colleagues generally restricted themselves to formal, often quite brief and superficial answers, while regularly stating their intention to present more comprehensive information on the matters raised at the Human Dimension Committee. So far we have not heard any additional information at the Human Dimension Committee, but we are willing in principle to look favourably on the transfer of all discussion on human rights from the Permanent Council to the third committee if the delegation of the United States of America advocates this approach and shares the logic behind it.

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to remind you of our concern regarding the prison at Guantánamo, where more than 150 prisoners continue to be held in custody. They have been there for so many years without charges being laid, their cases have not been heard by the civil courts of the United States of America, and there are numerous reports that they have been treated improperly.

We urge the United States of America once again to immediately implement the recommendation of the United Nations Human Rights Council and finally close the prison at Guantánamo. We should also like to know whether the American authorities have responded to the inquiry of Mr. Juan Méndez, the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Human Rights Council, regarding a visit to the Guantánamo base, which he sent to them in November last year.

Furthermore, we cannot fail to be disturbed by the information appearing about the possible use of torture and inhuman treatment against Bradley Manning, who is suspected of passing confidential information allegedly containing evidence of war crimes by the United States to the well-known WikiLeaks website. We regret that in point of fact the authorities of the United States of America prevented a meeting between Bradley Manning and Mr. Juan Méndez, the above-mentioned Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Human Rights Council, who had made a request to be present at the meeting.

The situation with regard to Bradley Manning has also clearly demonstrated the true attitude of the United States to the freedom of peaceful assembly. On 19 March this year in Washington, for example, the police used force when arresting 113 demonstrators who were demanding an end to the torture of Bradley Manning.

Another example of the violation by the United States of its OSCE commitments in this sphere was the violent dispersal of participants in a protest at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial in Washington on 28 May this year. In particular, five of the demonstrators were forcibly handcuffed, arrested and taken to the police station, where they were charged with holding a demonstration without permission. A television presenter from the channel "Russia Today" was arrested at the demonstration. (The distinguished Permanent Representative of Russia mentioned this at the last Permanent Council meeting.) Furthermore, a cameraman from NBC's Washington studio who had filmed the arrests was removed from the memorial by the police. We can see that there are also obvious problems in the United States with the freedom of the media and with the observance of the rights of journalists.

Considering our common OSCE commitments in combating intolerance, xenophobia, racism and extremism, including in the context of cyber security, we should also like to draw attention to another high-profile case associated with the hosting by United States servers of neo-Nazi websites banned in Austria, Germany and Hungary. According to our information, an Austrian website with neo-Nazi content, "Alpen-Donau.info", broadcast from a United States server (allegedly in the state of Arizona). Three of the creators of this website were arrested in Austria in April this year. Since 2008, the extremist site "Kuruc.info", which is banned in Hungary, has been operating from a United States server. It is impossible for us to comprehend how this relates to the common values of the OSCE.

To summarize my remarks, I should like once again in the spirit of open dialogue to urge the authorities of the United States of America to observe the OSCE commitments and to inform the Permanent Council about the issues mentioned and not to concentrate solely on criticizing other participating States.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.