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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Murder of Boris Nemtsov

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 5, 2015

The United States is shocked and saddened by the brutal murder of former Russian Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov in central Moscow last Friday. Throughout his political career, from his 1990 election to the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Republic, through his service as governor of Nizhniy Novgorod and as Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, until his work as a deputy in the Yaroslavl Regional Council, Mr. Nemtsov championed individual liberty and fought for reform. He had a vision of a Russia that was free, democratic, prosperous, and open, and the fact that he devoted his life to that vision—no matter how increasingly distant it became from the reality he and his compatriots inhabited—is testament to the faith he had in the Russian people and in the ultimate triumph of the universal principles that unite them with all people. His murder is a great loss not only to Russia, but to the world. We have lost a powerful voice advocating the fundamental principles on which this Organization was founded.

Sometimes in death a single life becomes a metaphor for a collective struggle. Tens of thousands of Russians turned out on March 1 in Moscow in freezing temperatures to honor the life and work of Boris Nemtsov. They gathered to mourn the loss of a champion and to express their enduring commitment to the causes for which he fought. They gathered to mourn a Russia that could have been—and to express solidarity and a determination to work together on behalf of a Russia that can be. Boris Nemtsov has been murdered, but the ideals and love of country that inspired him live on. Nemtsov saw that Russia didn't need to be a place where unacceptable political violence is accepted. Nemtsov saw that Russia didn't need to be a place where the corruption of a few robbed the futures of many. Nemtsov saw that Russia didn't need to be a place where those who expressed critical views were deemed traitors or imprisoned. Nemtsov saw that Russia didn't need to be a country that secretly sent its sons to invade a neighboring country, rather than investing in them at home.

All of the potential that Nemtsov saw in Russia remains. Russia has lost one of its most dedicated soldiers in the fight for a better future—but that campaign continues.

We offer our sincere condolences to Boris Yefimovich's family, friends, and loved ones, and to the Russian people, who have lost a colorful, energetic, dedicated, and eloquent leader. We call upon the Russian government to conduct a prompt and impartial investigation into the circumstances of his murder and ensure that those responsible for this vicious killing are brought to justice.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.