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

8 March 2012

**Regarding the presidential elections in the Russian Federation**

Mr. Chairperson,

First of all, we should like to congratulate our Russian colleagues on the successful holding of the presidential elections in the Russian Federation on 4 March 2012.

We welcome the fact that the presidential elections in Russia were well organized and proceeded in an atmosphere of openness and competition, with a fairly high turnout and increased involvement on the part of the citizens.

For the first time webcams installed in polling stations were used to ensure complete transparency in the voting process in Russia. The transparency of the election campaign was also confirmed by a large number of the international observers, who monitored the presidential elections at the invitation of the Russian authorities.

According to the Russian electoral authorities and international observers, there were no violations of the election laws that could have had a significant impact on the outcome of the elections.

Strict compliance with national law and due consideration of international standards made it possible to ensure the free expression of will of Russia's citizens.

Mr. Chairperson,

We have carefully analysed the assessments by the observation missions sent by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which worked in the Russian Federation during the elections. Once again, we are obliged to note the now traditional difference in the approaches taken by these missions to elections in the post-Soviet area.

We believe that one of the main reasons for this situation is the absence of uniform and comprehensible criteria for election observation activities by the ODIHR. In this respect,

the CIS is a step ahead, having among the tools available to it, for example, the Convention on Standards for Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms in the CIS Member States.

We are convinced of the need for greater co-ordination of the work of CIS and OSCE observers and also the organization of the ODIHR's election observation activities on the basis of agreement by consensus, which would make it possible to dispel any suspicions as regards subjectivity and bias in the Office's assessments.

We regret that during the Ministerial Council meeting in Vilnius it proved impossible to agree on the relevant ministerial decision that had been proposed by Belarus and a number of other participating States. At the same time, we trust that a substantive and effective discussion on improving the ODIHR's election observation activities will continue this year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.