



Delegation of Ukraine
to the OSCE

PC.DEL/239/06

16 March 2006

ENGLISH only

Statement
at the 598th Meeting of the Permanent Council

Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of Ukraine has aligned itself with the statement just made by the distinguished Ambassador of Austria on behalf of the European Union. Upon instructions from the capital, I would also like to make statement in my national capacity.

I wish to bring the attention of the Permanent Council to the Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine dated 13 March 2006 (I quote):

“We, in Ukraine, are deeply concerned about the arrest, on 12 March, by the Belarusian authorities, of six Ukrainian citizens who were present at a meeting with voters of one of the presidential candidates of the Republic of Belarus, as well as about interruption by force of the live coverage from Minsk of the TV camera group of the “Fifth Channel”, who were reporting on the developments in the election campaign in that country in the run-up to the voting on 19 March 2006.

The Ukrainian side regards the aforementioned fact as a violation of the fundamental rights of Ukrainian citizens, which are guaranteed by the international legal obligations of the Republic of Belarus and generally recognized international legal instruments, and notes with concern that unwarranted arrests of Ukrainian citizens in the Republic of Belarus have recently acquired systematic character.

It is also disturbing that the diplomats of the Embassy of Ukraine have not been given timely access to the arrested Ukrainian citizens; this runs counter to the provisions of Article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 24 April 1963 and violates an inherent right of every citizen to meet with a consular officer of his or her state. It has become even more obvious that the latest actions of the Belarusian authorities in placing restrictions on election campaigning, freedom of assembly and free functioning of mass media conflict with the voluntarily assumed OSCE commitments of that country and do not meet democratic standards.

As a country that has always acted in support of bringing the Republic of Belarus out of the international isolation, Ukraine urges the Belarusian authorities to respect political rights and freedoms of citizens, to ensure conditions for unhindered coverage by mass media of the candidates' campaigning, as well as to comply unswervingly with its OSCE commitments relating to free and democratic elections. The Ukrainian side urges immediate release of the arrested Ukrainian citizens.” (unquote).

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to inform the Permanent Council about another regrettable incident, which took place just yesterday.

On 15 March 2006, the Belarusian border guard personnel denied entry into Belarus for two citizens of Ukraine, Andriy Zhihulin and Vitaliy Doroshenko, members of a TV team of the “*Fifth Channel*”. This was done despite the fact that they had all necessary documents, including the accreditation by the Foreign Ministry of Belarus, allowing their professional activity in the country during the electoral period.

As in the previous case, Ukraine regards this as a violation of the rights of the aforementioned citizens of Ukraine, which are guaranteed by the international legal obligations of the Republic of Belarus and generally recognized international legal instruments. I would like to point out once again – it is a matter of concern to us that such steps being repeatedly taken by the Belarusian authorities vis-avis citizens of Ukraine have acquired systematic character.

Unfortunately, the representatives of the Embassy of Ukraine in Minsk have not yet received any clarifications from the Belarusian authorities as to the legal grounds for such steps.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs awaits relevant reaction from the Belarusian side.

The relevant note verbale was forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

Mr. Chairman,

Ukraine, as no other country, is interested in having an independent, prosperous, democratic and stable Belarus as its neighbour and friend. We view the presidential elections in the Republic Belarus as a “window of opportunity” for that country to comply with its OSCE commitments. We have been consistently standing against any international isolation of the Republic of Belarus and for its integration into European structures. Ukraine, therefore, is deeply concerned about the recurrent violations of the democratic norms and urges the Belarusian authorities to ensure free, transparent and democratic elections, and to respect political rights and freedoms of citizens.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.