Canadian Delegation to the
Organization for Security & Cooperation
in Europe

Délégation du Canada auprès de
l'Organisation pour la sécurité et la coopération
en Europe

DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE
STATEMENT BY YVES BEAULIEU, DEPUTY HEAD OF DELEGATION
ON THE SENTENCING OF BELARUS OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS
862ND MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
19 MAY 2011

Thank you Mr Chairperson,

The Government of Canada condemns the recent conviction and sentencing of Andrei Sannikov and four other Belarusian opposition activists. We urge Belarus to immediately stop all politically motivated trials, including those of other former presidential candidates.

We once again call on the Belarusian authorities to end their ongoing harassment of civil society, the opposition and the media, as well as to release all political prisoners. Canada supports the recent statement by the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, which stresses that the sentencing of Irina Khalip is another attempt to silence differing and critical voices in Belarus. Canada is particularly concerned about repression of the media in Belarus, and we call on the Government of Belarus to ensure that journalists can work freely, without the risk of intimidation.

Canada remains deeply concerned that Belarus is imposing harsh prison sentences on people expressing their views on the election results. We are disappointed by the deterioration of human rights and democratic governance in Belarus. We are appalled by the continuing repression of members of Belarusian civil society and the opposition, who have been subjected to arrests, detentions, searches and trials since the election.

Canada wishes to express its full solidarity with Mr. Sannikov, his family and the families of other defendants who have been convicted or will face trial in the near future.

We will continue to work with other democratic countries to address Belarus's lack of respect for fundamental human rights and OSCE commitments.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.