



United States Mission to the OSCE

Reply to Belarus

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
at the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 22, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We are a bit taken aback that Belarus has raised this issue for the second week in a row as I thought we had covered it last week under current issues. I will certainly transmit to my authorities the statement we have heard from Belarus. I am sure that they will be quite interested to hear how seriously Belarus seems to take the measures which my own government has put in place.

I can certainly confirm that on November 13th the Treasury Department of the United States froze the assets of Belneftekhim and its U.S. representative office. This step was taken, as my Belarusian colleague stated, in accordance with Executive Order 13405, which was issued on June 19, 2006, which specifically targets persons who undermine Belarus' democratic processes or engage in political repression on public corruption. Under that act sixteen senior officials of the Belarusian Government, including its leader, Aleksandr Lukashenko, have already been designated. Lukashenko's control over Belneftekhim was in fact the basis for this further designation.

We are going to continue to monitor and take actions against Belarusian authorities who are responsible for human rights abuses, assaults on democracy, and state corruption. And we do not believe that the steps we have taken in any way are in violation of our own obligations undertaken in the OSCE.

It is interesting when listening to my Belarusian colleague cite various parts of the Helsinki Final Act that he chose to avoid the basic comprehensive concept that we have all established for security, which makes the human dimension as well an essential element for the security of the OSCE region, and chooses to avoid that element which led, in fact, my government to take the decisions which we have taken under Executive Order 13405.

In particular, we remain concerned about Belarusian violation of key commitments and principles it has undertaken to the OSCE with regard to freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, with regard to the right to a fair trial, with regard to the right to effective remedies and access to justice, with regard to the right of freedom of association and the right of peaceful assembly, and freedom of expression and a free media.

With regard to the question of mediation by our Chairman-in-Office, we of course would look forward to any contacts with Foreign Minister Moratinos or a member of his staff and would note that next week we will all be gathered in Madrid and there will be ample opportunity. I can well imagine however this might be a somewhat awkward conversation with the United States as Foreign Minister Moratinos is a member and in great standing of the European Union which also has invoked sanctions against Belarus. But we would look

forward to those conversations. If he should choose to engage we suggest that he also engage with Belarusian authorities with regard to their violations of OSCE commitments which led to this decision, as I just enumerated.

Thank you.