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Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Belarus to the OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR VIKTAR GAISENAK,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 January 2005

**Agenda item: Statement by Mr. Jean Asselborn, Vice Prime Minister
and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg**

Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of Belarus would like to welcome the Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, Mr. Jean Asselborn, and to congratulate Luxembourg on assuming the functions of the presidency of the European Union (EU).

We should like to thank the Vice Prime Minister for his informative statement setting out the priorities for the Luxembourg presidency of the EU. In our view, the statement testifies to the unity of the goals and principles of the OSCE and the EU. Stability, security and the development of co-operation in Europe are our common priorities. This presupposes and predetermines the need for close co-operation between our organizations. We see the countering of terrorism, trafficking, illegal migration and organized crime as being among the most important areas of such co-operation.

We also hope that the European Union will be actively engaged in the process of reforming our Organization so as to make it more appropriate to present-day threats and challenges and relevant to all participating States.

There is no doubt that the process of EU enlargement is, on the whole, playing a positive role in the development of the OSCE area. At the same time, there is also evidence that enlargement has led to a number of negative consequences for the EU's immediate neighbours.

In that connection, we welcomed the elaboration and approval by the EU of a strategy for co-operation with neighbouring States. This initiative, in our view, carries a constructive "charge" in terms of stimulating cross-border co-operation along the perimeter of the enlarged EU. The European Neighbourhood Policy clearly has great and promising potential for the countries involved in it, the Republic of Belarus among others.

In the light of this, we are interested in a pragmatic and inclusive neighbourhood built upon the principles of mutual respect and balanced consideration for the interests of all parties. We are interested in a neighbourhood that would enable the concept of “dividing lines” to become a thing of the past.

Unfortunately, because of market-related reasons Belarus has, for all intents and purposes, been deprived of the opportunity to participate in the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Such an approach is, at the very least, counterproductive. Without the participation of Belarus in work on the stated priority areas, the concept of “neighbourhood” will lose considerable value.

Mr. Chairman,

On more than one occasion, we have emphasized that Belarus is prepared to engage in constructive co-operation with the EU, built on a pragmatic and unbiased approach and on the basis of equal rights, open dialogue and compromise. Belarus is not asking for co-operation but offering it, and it is in the interests of the European Union itself to reciprocate this offer.

Belarus is already making a tangible contribution to the development of pan-European processes, acting as a factor in politico-military and inter-ethnic stability and helping to stem adverse migratory flows in the region and to ensure that the international transport and energy infrastructure functions effectively.

It is high time that the EU leaves behind its short-sighted policy of preconditions and sanctions with regard to Belarus. We are convinced that the transition of our partners to a policy of common sense, taking into account the objective realities in Belarus, will contribute to the development of mutually beneficial co-operation on the basis of equal rights. We, for our part, will continue working with all those who are willing to work hard and to listen carefully to their opponents.

In conclusion, we should like to wish the Luxembourg presidency of the European Union every success in the work ahead of it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.