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## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement on Repression in Belarus**

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
September 20, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We again must address the Permanent Council to express our concerns regarding increased repression and intimidation by Belarusian authorities of their citizens. Recently, opposition politician Andrey Klimov was convicted in a closed trial for publishing material on the Internet criticizing the Lukashenka government. Police arrested people who were peacefully protesting the politically motivated trials of Young Front members, arrested the performers and audience of a play, and detained citizens attempting to take part in a commemoration of a medieval battle. Political parties planning to take part in parliamentary elections next year have been threatened with deregistration. Meanwhile, opposition politician Aleksandr Kozulin continues to serve a 5-1/2 year jail sentence for the crime of protesting the severely flawed results of the March 2007 presidential election.

The Lukashenka government has expressed its desire for improved relations with the United States and other democratic nations. However, as long as the Belarusian authorities are not ready to abide by democratic norms, the U.S. will continue to maintain and strengthen sanctions on those responsible. We urge the Belarusian authorities to release all prisoners held on politically motivated charges. Moreover, we call upon them to fulfill their OSCE obligations and respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Belarus, including their right to assemble peacefully and express themselves freely. Belarusians are paying a severe price for exercising the basic rights that are taken for granted in democratic societies.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.