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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Continuing Situation in Belarus

As delivered by Charge d' Affaires Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 2, 2011

I would like to call the attention of participating States to the statement made by President Obama on May 27 condemning the conviction and sentencing of opposition presidential candidates Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu, Andrey Sannikau, Vital Rymasheuski, Mikalay Statkevich, and Dzmitry Us in Belarus. The statement was distributed as SEC.DEL/209/11 on May 31.

The United States considers these candidates and the other courageous activists and candidates arrested and charged in conjunction with the crackdown on December 19 as political prisoners. In a major step backward for democracy in Belarus, their trials were clearly politically motivated and failed to meet even the most minimal standards required of a fair and independent judiciary. We welcome the broad international consensus condemning the actions of Aleksandr Lukashenka and the Government of Belarus in this matter.

Consistent with our values and principles, the U.S. Government will pursue new sanctions against select Belarusian state-owned enterprises, in addition to the sanctions, travel restrictions, and asset freezes announced on January 31. These measures are targeted against those responsible for the repression, particularly Mr. Lukashenka, and are not directed against the people of Belarus. We are coordinating with other concerned governments to ensure that through the implementation of a flexible international sanctions regime we hold accountable those Belarusian officials responsible for these repressive actions. We have also increased our assistance in support of democratic reform in Belarus. We join the European Union and our other allies and partners in supporting the aspirations of the people of Belarus for a modern, democratic and prosperous society within Europe.

We once again call on the Government of Belarus to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners and cease continuing human rights violations against critics of the government, who remain at risk of harassment and arbitrary arrest.

Thank you, Chair.