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Delegation of Belarus

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALYAKSANDR SYCHOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS
TO THE OSCE, AT THE MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

28 February 2008

**In response to the statement by Mr. Ján Kubiš,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic**

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Belarus, I should like to welcome Minister Kubiš to this meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council. We commend the contribution that Mr. Kubiš made as Secretary General of the OSCE to the work of our Organization and to the promotion of the Helsinki principles.

We thank him for his extremely detailed and interesting report on the priorities of the Slovak Republic's Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

We fully share the view that there is a need to develop close collaboration between the OSCE and the Council of Europe, particularly in those areas identified in the 2005 Declaration on Co-operation between the two organizations, namely combating terrorism, protecting the rights of national minorities, countering trafficking in human beings and promoting tolerance and non-discrimination.

The agendas of the two organizations overlap in many areas. For that reason, it is important to co-ordinate efforts and actions to achieve maximum effect and to avoid duplication.

The Republic of Belarus is a candidate country for accession to the Council of Europe and is keen to develop constructive relations with that organization.

We are pleased to note that recently our contacts with the Council of Europe have been intensified both within the Committee of Ministers and within the Parliamentary Assembly.

Representatives of the Republic of Belarus are participating at the expert level in the work of various Council of Europe committees, including work on the European Cultural Convention. Over the last few years the Republic of Belarus has acceded to a number of the

Council of Europe's legal instruments. Specifically, the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption will enter into force in Belarus on 1 March 2008. We are interested in further expanding co-operation with the Council of Europe in the legal sphere, including accession to the European Convention on Cybercrime of 2001 and the European Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of 2005.

We take a positive view of the attention being paid by the Slovak Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers to the development of relations between the Council of Europe and the Republic of Belarus. We are confident that the efforts and initiatives of the Slovak Government will help to ensure further rapprochement between Belarus and the organization.

In conclusion, we should like to wish Mr. Kubiš every success in his post of Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and express the hope that our bilateral relations with the Slovak Republic will continue to develop positively.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.