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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**

1 September 2011

**Regarding sanctions by the United States of America against
Belarusian enterprises**

Mr. Chairperson,

On 11 August 2011 the United States Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) imposed sanctions against four enterprises of the Belnefttekhim concern – Belshina, Grodno Azot, Grodno Khimvolokno and Naftan.

Under this decision the Belarusian enterprises have been included in a special list of persons and organizations whose property interests in the United States are blocked. Physical persons and legal entities in the United States are prohibited from doing business with these enterprises. The United States has given as the reason for the introduction of these sanctions the alleged occurrence of "human rights abuses related to political oppression in Belarus".

The Belarusian side regards the decision by the United States Government to introduce economic restrictions against the Republic of Belarus as an unjustified and unlawful move. These restrictions are regarded by the Belarusian side as politically motivated decisions and they undermine the economic basis for bilateral co-operation.

These actions by the United States represent an egregious violation of the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, under which, in return for our country's voluntary renunciation of nuclear weapons, the United States undertook not to apply measures of economic coercion against the Republic of Belarus.

We find this decision particularly incomprehensible in the light of the fact that the security guarantees given to Belarus in the aforementioned Memorandum have been confirmed by the United States in the joint statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus and the Secretary of State of the United States on the outcome of their meeting in Astana on 1 December 2010.

In addition, as a signatory to the Helsinki Final Act the United States has committed itself to "refraining in all circumstances from any act of economic coercion designed to

subordinate to its own interest the exercise by another participating State of the rights inherent in its sovereignty”.

The actions of the United States also contravene United Nations General Assembly resolution 62/183, which states that “no State may use or encourage the use of unilateral economic, political or any other type of measures to coerce another State in order to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights”. Further, United Nations General Assembly resolution 62/162 “Human rights and unilateral coercive measures” urges all States “to stop adopting or implementing any unilateral measures not in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States, in particular those of a coercive nature with all their extraterritorial effects”.

Mr. Chairperson,

The methods of intimidation and of economic pressure and coercion being applied by the United States against the Republic of Belarus are absolutely unacceptable in international practice and can lead only to an exacerbation of tension in relations between sovereign States and in the international arena as a whole.

The arguments put forth by the United States to the effect that the sanctions are allegedly not aimed at ordinary people are not true since the enterprises against which these sanctions have been introduced employ some 40,000 men and women. The sanctions amount to direct pressure on the socio-economic interests of the persons working at these firms.

The United States sanctions imposed on the four Belarusian enterprises represent a form of unfair competition in respect of Belarusian firms that are widely known throughout the world and enjoy a well-deserved reputation. These enterprises operate exclusively in the economic interest of the entire Belarusian people. They do business in a transparent manner and support numerous socially useful projects. Thanks to a successful marketing strategy, they have succeeded in developing their scientific, technical, production-related and personnel potential and in gradually strengthening their positions in international markets. In the light of these facts, any restrictions placed on the work of these firms represent a blow not only to the enterprises themselves and to their employees but also to the interests of all the citizens of Belarus.

In the face of this escalation by the United States of unfriendly actions against Belarus and its people, the Belarusian side has been forced to freeze the implementation of certain bilateral co-operation projects with the United States and reserves the right to take further appropriate measures in response. At the same time, Belarus is continuing to observe meticulously its relevant international obligations.

We call on the United States to refrain from a policy of economic sanctions and to respond to the urgings and resolutions of the United Nations by reviewing immediately its practice of applying discriminatory measures against Belarusian enterprises. We also call on the Chairmanship and the appropriate structures of the OSCE, specifically the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, to provide an objective assessment of the actions of the United States and of their conformity with the commitments assumed within our Organization.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.