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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 911th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

10 May 2012

**In response to the concerns over the suppression of illegal acts by
participants in the demonstrations in Moscow**

Mr. Chairperson,

We have taken note of our American colleagues' concern over the detention of rioters and participants in illegal acts in Moscow in recent days. In this connection we should like to mention the following.

During the action on 6 May known as the "March of Millions", which brought together a few thousand people, blatant provocations were committed by the participants. In particular, there was an attempt to organize a march on the Kremlin. In suppressing the public disturbances, some 30 police officers suffered fractures, wounds, bruises, brain injuries, and chemical burns to the eyes. The assailants hurled stones, bottles and flares at the police, and used gas. Demonstrators also used violence against journalists.

Russian human rights advocates and eyewitnesses called the "March of Millions" a planned provocation, emphasizing in particular that the organizers themselves instigated the break-up of the demonstration. Similar assessments were made by Mr. Vladimir Lukin, the Human Rights Ombudsman, and Mr. Mikhail Fedotov, Chairman of the Russian Human Rights Council.

In spite of the numerous provocations, the actions of the Russian law enforcement agencies, aimed at suppressing the lawbreaking and the public disturbances, were strictly proportional. The Main Investigations Directorate of the Moscow Investigation Committee instituted criminal proceedings against the demonstrators because of the public calls for mass disturbances that were heard in the course of the action, and because the demonstrators put up resistance and inflicted bodily harm on police officers.

The arrests over the following days involved only those who took part in illegal actions and refused to obey police officers' lawful requests. At the same time, several of these people were detained repeatedly.

In this connection, the expressions of concern at today's meeting can only evoke bewilderment. As shown in practice, the approaches to suppressing illegal actions in our region are similar in many respects. The difference consists only in that the methods of the Russian law enforcement agencies are more humane. They do not use special means, such as tear gas, pepper spray, water cannons, rubber bullets or trained dogs.

Recently, the media have captured repeated images of demonstrations being broken up and bodily harm and injuries being inflicted on demonstrators in countries "to the west of Vienna". For some reason, however, this does not arouse concern among our American colleagues. We have already informed the Permanent Council about the disproportionate use of force and the unjustifiable cruelty shown by American law enforcement personnel. Also noteworthy are the disturbing signals that we have been receiving ever more frequently in recent years of the steady growth in arrests of peaceful protesters in the United States. Human rights advocates estimate that the number of people detained for taking part in the "Occupy Wall Street" actions is around 7,000. And that is only one of the protest movements.

As recently as on 1 May, scores of participants in actions prompted by the worsening of social and economic conditions in the country were detained. As reported in the media, arrests took place in Los Angeles, New York, Oakland, Portland and Seattle. In Oakland, moreover, the police used tear gas.

Our American colleagues have often pointed out that respect for freedom of assembly is extremely important in promoting dialogue between citizens and their government as a basis for the development of a culture of democracy. In this connection, it would be interesting to know what steps the United States authorities are taking to strengthen such a dialogue and how they ensured the implementation of OSCE commitments during the protest actions to which we referred. We hope that our request for such information will not go unanswered, as has unfortunately often happened in the case of our previous inquiries on other subjects (for example, concerning the journalists who died at the hands of American military personnel in Iraq).

Moscow places great value on its collaboration with the United States on the issue of human rights. We again confirm that we are open to an objective discussion of what the United States authorities are doing to ensure the right to freedom of assembly and association.

Thank you for your attention.