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Delegation of Belgium

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF BELGIUM AT THE  
962nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

25 July 2013

**In response to the statement at the Permanent Council meeting of 4 July by  
the Russian Federation regarding allegedly anti-Semitic  
incidents in Belgium**

Mr. Chairperson,

Belgium wishes to take note of the statement by the Russian Federation regarding racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and neo-Nazism made three weeks ago at the Permanent Council meeting on 4 July and thank it for the priority it gives to these important subjects.

In its statement, the Russian delegation cited an incident in the commune of Aartselaar in Belgium which it called anti-Semitic and which it used as an example of a rise in anti-Semitism in Belgium.

After checking the police records, it emerged that the description of this incident was incorrect as anti-Semitic, since it was caused by excessive noise at night in an apartment building and by a dispute between neighbours.

The police dealt with the incident in the routine manner, and there is no doubt that they could certainly have assessed its scope or potential impact better. However, the police were initially unaware of the Jewish identity of the woman concerned.

Mr. Chairperson,

Like our Russian partner, we should like to take this opportunity to underscore the importance our country attaches to combating anti-Semitism.

In this spirit, we welcomed the three Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on combating discrimination against Jews, Christians and Muslims for an official visit to Belgium on 10 and 11 June. We were particularly pleased to have an opportunity to explain our whole plan for combating anti-Semitism to Rabbi Andrew Baker. The Personal Representative was very pleased with and enthusiastic about the different instruments we have, particularly for combating anti-Semitism, whether this be legal provisions at the national level, or at the regional level, or through training, where there are various initiatives for raising awareness among young people.

I should also like to point out in this forum that in Belgium anti-Semitic comments are prohibited by law and those who make them are prosecuted.

Finally, Mr. Chairperson, the Belgian authorities are very alert to any incident that may be described as anti-Semitic, given the large Jewish community living in my country and the excellent relationship we have with it. We therefore participate actively in a variety of activities to combat every form of discrimination, and we invest in the protection of our country's Jewish community.

Thus in 2012, Belgium chaired the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. In that context we were able to develop many activities to support this cause. Among other things, we attended the conference "Addressing the Security Needs of Jewish Communities in the OSCE Region: Challenges and Good Practices" held in Berlin on 13 June.

Combating anti-Semitism has always been a very important political priority for Belgium. We support every initiative in this area and thank Russia once again for the attention it is devoting to it.