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

13 January 2011

**In response to the statements by the European Union and the  
United States of America regarding Belarus**

Mr. Chairperson,

We have carefully listened to the statements made by the delegations of the European Union, the United States of America, Ukraine, Canada and Russia regarding the recent events in Belarus. My government will be made fully aware of the content of these statements.

Permit me, in the light of what we have just heard, to also make a number of comments.

First of all, we should like to call on our partners not to artificially inflame this situation but instead to carefully analyse once again the events in question and to formulate a balanced and sober assessment based on objective facts and real actions.

I shall repeat myself (I have already discussed this matter in sufficient detail at one of the meetings of the Permanent Council at the end of last year). On the evening of 19 December 2010, following the presidential elections, Minsk was the scene of a demonstration for which no permission had been given and which degenerated into large-scale rioting and an attempt to seize by force Government House, where at that time the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus was working.

Throughout the entire demonstration, the Belarusian law enforcement authorities displayed maximum restraint and forbearance and took only those measures necessary to put an end to the violence that was occurring. It was largely thanks to the decisive actions of the law enforcement authorities that it proved possible to avoid human casualties, something that, considering the nature and course of the events, was no small achievement.

We should like to underscore that within the OSCE we have all undertaken to guarantee freedom of peaceful assembly and not freedom of violence. Large-scale rioting,

extremism and violence must be seen for what they are by the law. We firmly believe that this is the approach followed in any State based on the rule of law.

The majority of the persons taking part in this unsanctioned demonstration were found guilty of administrative violations by the courts. Criminal proceedings have also been instituted under article 293 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus in connection with these events. As of this moment, charges have been brought against 31 demonstrators; these have to do with the commission of premeditated actions aimed at organizing large-scale rioting, accompanied by violence against persons, pogroms, the destruction of property and armed resistance to the law enforcement authorities, and also with direct involvement in large-scale rioting.

A number of persons who have been charged are currently being held in detention facilities at the State Security Committee. On the basis of the results of the investigations conducted, a number of these persons, including the former presidential candidate Vitaliy Rymashevskiy, have had their detention sentences changed in return for their undertaking not to leave the area.

According to the information provided by the Belarusian law enforcement authorities, the persons remaining in custody are being held under satisfactory conditions that meet the necessary standards. They undergo medical checks every day and, if needed, receive all necessary medical and preventive treatment. In order to provide the necessary medical assistance, additional doctors are on call around the clock.

Accordingly, the detention conditions for the accused and the investigative measures being applied in their regard are fully in keeping with Belarusian laws.

As regards the detention of certain journalists, a question also raised in the recent press release by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, here it is the task of the investigative authorities to find a link and draw a line between journalistic activity and the organization of large-scale rioting or involvement in it.

Mr. Chairperson,

As regards the decision not to extend the mandate of the OSCE Office in Minsk, the Belarusian position was set out in detail at the meeting of the OSCE Preparatory Committee on 31 December 2010 (the text of that statement was circulated on the same day under reference number PC.DEL/1191/10) and again today as part of the discussion of the statement by the Chairperson-in-Office.

We should merely like to add that some of our partners evidently find it difficult to understand and accept that OSCE missions are not eternal and that they must inevitably close down once they have performed their mandates. Precisely this provision is contained in the OSCE Charter for European Security of 1999. Given the fact that there are no objective criteria for assessing the performance of field mission mandates and taking into account their fairly general and occasionally vague formulation, the final word in determining to what degree a specific mandate has been carried out rests with the host country. If missions are instruments of assistance, they cannot be imposed. There is also no need to look for any kind of "evil intention" in the decision of the Belarusian authorities regarding the OSCE Office in Minsk or to link that decision with anything else.

In that connection, we once again urge delegations not to dramatize the situation concerning either the events in Minsk on 19 December 2010 or the question of the OSCE Office. We also reaffirm the Belarusian Government's intention to engage in constructive co-operation with all our partners in the OSCE on all the items on the Organization's agenda.

We firmly believe that only dialogue and co-operation, for which we are ready, and not restrictive measures that are detrimental to the interests of all parties, provide the sole true approach and reliable instrument when tackling problems, dealing with mutual concerns and strengthening confidence and security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.