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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

2 June 2011

Regarding freedom of assembly in the United States of America

Mr. Chairperson,

We are seriously disturbed at the reports to the effect that since the beginning of this year alone over 670 participants in peaceful protests have been detained in the United States. Alarming signals continue to be received indicating a trend towards a steady increase in the number of such arrests in recent years. For example, in 2009 665 persons were detained, whereas in 2010 the number already exceeded 1,290. The fact that the breaking up of demonstrations in the United States goes virtually unreported by the leading media in that country makes it difficult, in the opinion of experts, to calculate the exact number of demonstrators arrested.

A recent example was the arrest on 29 May at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial of persons taking part in a peaceful demonstration in defence of the first amendment to the United States Constitution, which guarantees American citizens freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. Among those detained was Adam Kokesh, the moderator of a programme on the channel "Russia Today".

According to American civil rights activists, this year more than 30 demonstrations have resulted in arrests. Those gathering were protesting for a very wide variety of causes, but the finale was always the same – handcuffs, the police station, fines or an appearance in court.

Since the beginning of this year, our colleagues from the United States have repeatedly voiced their concern at the actions of the authorities in a number of OSCE countries with regard to unsanctioned demonstrations and arrests of persons guilty of disturbing public order. In so doing, they have consistently drawn attention to the fact that respect for freedom of assembly is of extraordinarily great importance for advancing dialogue between citizens and the government as a basis for positive changes and a deeper development of the culture of democracy in any society.

In this connection, we call on the United States to take the same respectful attitude towards the strengthening of dialogue with its own citizens that it takes to the observance of civil rights in other countries.

We value highly our co-operation with the United States as regards civil rights and are prepared to assist our partner in fulfilling its OSCE commitments in this area. We also believe that there are possible ways in which the executive structures of our Organization could also assist the United States in this respect.

Thank you for your attention.