

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**

19 May 2011

**In response to the statements by the European Union, the
United States of America and Canada**

Mr. Chairperson,

We have listened closely to the statements by the distinguished delegation of Hungary on behalf of the European Union and by the delegations of the United States of America and Canada. The content of these statements will be brought to the attention of our capital.

For our part, we should like to inform the Permanent Council that a process of legal assessment of the post-election events that took place in Minsk on 19 December 2010 is continuing in Belarus. Charges were filed against the organizers and some participants in these events, and judicial hearings are currently being held. Sentences have already been handed down against a number of defendants, including the former presidential candidate, Mr. Sannikov, who was mentioned today. He, in particular, was found guilty by the court of having organized mass disturbances and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. This sentence may be appealed in accordance with established procedure.

We should like to stress that all of the judicial processes are taking place openly and transparently, in accordance with the national laws of the Republic of Belarus and the principle of the rule of law. Representatives of the public, the media, and international observers have access to the court sessions. I would remind the Permanent Council that experts from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights are also monitoring the judicial proceedings at the invitation of Belarus.

As for the situation regarding freedom of the media in Belarus, we should like to stress once more that media and journalists who perform their duties in a responsible and professional manner, within the legislation in force, do not experience any kind of difficulties or problems in their work. Over 900 independent publications are registered and operating successfully in Belarus today. This is more than double the number of government-sponsored print media.

The Ministry of Information of Belarus did indeed bring legal actions for the closure of two independent newspapers, *Narodnaya Volya* and *Nasha Niva*, to which repeated warnings had been issued. However, the judicial proceedings on those actions were halted pending an appeal by the publications in question against the latest warnings from the Ministry of Information.

Unfortunately, we must acknowledge once again that some of our partners in the OSCE, in assessing particular events in Belarus, are guided in the first instance not by legal, but by political considerations. It is also regrettable to note their readiness, not to engage in dialogue and co-operation, but to impose restrictive measures. This runs counter not only to existing OSCE commitments, but to the logic and spirit of the entire Helsinki process.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.