



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Article 31 Protests in Russia

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a. i. Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 7, 2011

The United States is concerned by reports of the detention on March 31 of many Russian citizens who were participating in peaceful rallies throughout Russia to demonstrate their support for Article 31 of the Russian Constitution, which guarantees Russian citizens the right to peaceful assembly. The United States reiterates the importance of embracing and protecting universal values, including the freedoms of expression and assembly, enshrined in the Russian Constitution as well as in international agreements to which Russia is a party.

Freedom of assembly and freedom of expression are not only vital elements of sound political systems, they are essential for economic modernization and broad-based prosperity. Without freedom of assembly, it will be impossible to foster genuine competition during Russia's upcoming parliamentary elections in December.

We do note that, since October 2010, the Moscow City Government has allowed some demonstrations in support of the right to peaceful assembly to take place as planned. This is positive indeed. We urge the same respect for the organizers of future demonstrations both in Moscow and in other Russian municipalities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.