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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**

1 September 2011

Regarding the death of Andrzej Lepper

Mr. Chairperson,

With deep sorrow and also concern Belarus received the news of the death of Andrzej Lepper, the founder and leader of the Polish political party “Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland”, the former Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland, the former Minister of Agriculture and the former Deputy Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland.

As you are aware, Mr. Lepper’s body was discovered on 5 August 2011 in the office of the party “Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland”. According to preliminary reports by the Polish authorities, he had committed suicide.

Andrzej Lepper was not afraid to openly speak the truth, and had been repeatedly subjected to criticism by his political opponents for his stands on civil society issues.

We are troubled by the disturbing fact of the death of this outstanding opposition politician, all the more since it occurred on the eve of parliamentary elections. We call on the Polish authorities to carry out an objective and thorough investigation of this tragedy. Considering the seriousness of the situation, the issuance of invitations to independent international experts and the making available to them of opportunities to study the case files and to draw their own conclusions would make it possible to dispel any doubts as to the objectivity of the investigatory findings regarding Mr. Lepper’s death.

Mr. Chairperson,

I should also like to note our bewilderment at the fact that Poland has blocked the expression of the purely human feelings of the Belarusian representatives who wished to pay their final respects to the leader of the “Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland” party. Two members of the Belarusian delegation who had planned to take part in events to mourn the death of Mr. Lepper were refused visas by the Polish authorities. The exploitation of a

tragedy for the purpose of asserting political convictions is unacceptable from the standpoint of pan-European values and is at odds with humanitarian standards.

We should like to recall at this point that some time ago the Belarusian authorities took a directly opposite, i.e. humanitarian, approach and gave every opportunity to Polish officials to take part in memorial services on the territory of our country (in connection with the tragedy that befell the Polish President's delegation near Smolensk and in connection with the anniversary of that tragedy and with the death of Cardinal Kazimierz Swiatek) – this despite the fact that some of those officials are on the list of persons barred from entering the territory of the Republic of Belarus.

We trust that the Polish Government will take all possible steps, including within the OSCE, to dispel the worrying doubts surrounding the causes and circumstances of the mysterious violent death of this well-known opposition politician and that it will furnish the OSCE with detailed information on the essential points raised in our statement.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.