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Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Belarus to the OSCE

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

27 October 2005

**In response to the statement by Mr. Antanas Valionis,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania**

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Belarusian delegation, I should like to welcome the distinguished Minister, Mr. Valionis, to this meeting of the Permanent Council.

We should like to thank him for his interesting statement, in which he outlined Lithuania's long-term vision of the future of the OSCE. This is especially important for us, considering the current discussion on the reform of the Organization and Lithuania's application to assume the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010.

The remarks we have heard today as regards increasing the effectiveness of the OSCE are quite constructive and pragmatic. In particular, we share the view that there is a need to step up political dialogue between the participating States. Clearly, this dialogue can only be between equal partners. The discussion going on today about ways to improve the consultation and decision-making process within the OSCE is aimed at solving this problem.

We share the vision of the Lithuanian authorities in so important an area as the enhancement of the role of the Secretary General.

We support the argument in favour of a greater emphasis in the practical work of the Organization on preventive diplomacy and conflict settlement.

We are prepared to continue the discussion of these and other issues relating to OSCE reform with representatives of the Lithuanian delegation in Vienna, with which we have established a good relationship.

In addition, we have drawn attention to the idea of a multidimensional approach to the examination of security issues. We believe that all three dimensions of the OSCE are of equal value and should be developed in a balanced manner.

That this is so can be clearly seen from the example of energy security. The issues involved here can and must be examined within the OSCE in the light of the full range of the commitments undertaken.

In that connection, I should like to touch on a subject that we have already raised at a previous meeting of the Permanent Council and that concerns Lithuania's intention to build in the immediate vicinity of the Belarusian border a storage depot for waste nuclear fuel from the Ignalina nuclear power plant, the kind of facility that would present a clear environmental and radiation hazard.

In the 2003 OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension, the participating States identified the protection of the environment as a high priority and decided to "encourage dialogue and the exchange of information ..., on a voluntary basis, on environmental issues of importance for participating States".

We trust that with regard to this matter the Lithuanian authorities will act in a spirit of maximum transparency and good-neighbourliness, among other ways by providing the necessary information regarding the construction and operation of the storage site. It is essential here to prevent the emergence of an information vacuum concerning the construction of the depot, to hold regular consultations with neighbouring countries in order to monitor the cross-border effect of this dangerous nuclear facility on the environment, and to keep the public regularly informed regarding the decisions taken on this matter by the Lithuanian Government. We are of the opinion that Lithuania must take into account the interests of Belarus and indeed of other neighbouring countries as well at every stage when taking decisions that might have cross-border consequences.

All of these questions are extremely important for us both in the context of the OSCE's overall security agenda and as part of our bilateral relations with Lithuania.

We are pleased to note that the bilateral dialogue has recently been stepped up, as indicated by a number of major projects carried out this year and by the holding of high-level economic and cultural events. We trust that this co-operation will continue to expand in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.