

PC.DEL/292/05

14 April 2005

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

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**

14 April 2005

**The general election in the United Kingdom**

Mr. Chairman,

We should like to touch on a number of points in connection with the information provided by the distinguished ambassador of the United Kingdom at the last meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council regarding the general election to be held in the United Kingdom on 5 May of this year and the invitation to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and to participating States to send observers to this election.

First, we note that this is not the first time that Member States of the European Union, which have been consistent in their verbal support of the ODIHR's existing methodology, have extended invitations to the ODIHR less than one month before elections are held. However, the ODIHR Election Observation Handbook states that such invitations should be sent out no less than two to three months before an election so that the Office can decide whether or not to send monitors. As we see it, if an invitation is issued less than one month before an election the ODIHR is deprived of the opportunity to monitor it.

Second, we should like to ask the delegation of the United Kingdom about the state of affairs with regard to the access of invited international observers to polling stations. We all remember the problems that arose during several recent regional elections in the United Kingdom, in connection, among other things, with the refusal to allow OSCE observers into polling stations in Northern Ireland in 2003.

According to information available, despite repeated assurances from representatives of the United Kingdom, the relevant electoral laws have yet to be revised.

Third, our delegation is concerned about the current postal voting system in the United Kingdom, in which there exists a potential risk of violations of the principle of equal elections and of extensive abuses during the counting of the votes. This is especially relevant in the light of the violations that occurred during the municipal elections in Birmingham in June of last year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.