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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Belarus Helsinki Commission

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Bruce Connuck
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 27, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States deeply regrets that we are again compelled by the actions of Belarusian authorities to raise the continuing harassment of the Belarus Helsinki Committee.

We understand that the Deputy Chairman of the Belarusian Supreme Economic Court is petitioning for the court to overturn its previous rulings clearing the Belarus Helsinki Committee of certain financial charges.

Re-opening a case against the Belarus Helsinki Committee on charges for which it has been cleared more than once makes a mockery of rule-of-law principles.

In the context of the sustained harassment by the authorities of the Belarus Helsinki Committee, which engages in admirable work to raise awareness of the serious human rights problems in Belarus, we can only view this latest development as politically motivated.

We remind the Belarusian Government that, under the 1991 Moscow Document, it committed to "welcome NGO activities, including, inter alia, observing compliance with CSCE commitments in the field of the human dimension."

This commitment applies not only to the Belarus Helsinki Committee, but also to many other civil society organizations that have fallen victim in recent years in Belarus to capricious legal requirements and spurious court cases.

We call on Belarus to end its campaign against the Belarus Helsinki Committee and to allow the normal development of civil society in accordance with OSCE commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.