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Canadian Delegation to the
Organization for Security & Cooperation
in Europe



Délégation du Canada auprès de
l'Organisation pour la sécurité et la coopération
en Europe

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE
IN RESPONSE TO THE ARREST OF BELARUSIAN OPPOSITION LEADER
607TH MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
04 MAY 2006**

Mr. Chairman,

On 27 April Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister, Peter MacKay, condemned the arrest of Belarus' opposition leader, Alexander Milinkevich, and his sentence to 15 days in jail.

In calling for Alexander Milinkevich's immediate release from incarceration, Minister MacKay voiced Canada's strong displeasure at his arrest and detention simply for exercising his democratic right of peaceful assembly.

He noted this as another example of the Belarus regime denying freedom and democracy and called on Belarusian authorities to respect their citizens' rights to peaceful protest and free speech.

Mr. Chairman, Canada believes that common respect for our OSCE democratic commitments is vital to a Euro-Atlantic community of shared values. Belarus can and should be part of this community of states where political dialogue is vibrant and informed and where debate and discussion can take place without fear of reprisal.

Canada stands ready to support all those who embrace our shared OSCE values and commitments and work to promote them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.