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Delegation of Belarus

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

22 December 2011

**In response to the statements by the European Union and the
United States of America regarding Belarus**

Mr. Chairperson,

We have listened carefully to the statements by the delegation of Poland on behalf of the European Union and by the delegation of the United States and we intend to bring the points made in them to the attention of our authorities in the capital.

We note that a number of our partners are continuing to show great interest in the events taking place in Belarus. The form in which this interest is manifested is predictable. The fact that all events occurring in our country are viewed through an exclusively critical prism has therefore for a long time come as no surprise to the Government of Belarus. The deliberately negative tone of statements of this kind is in no way conducive to mutually respectful and substantive dialogue within the Permanent Council.

As for the actual content of the statements we have heard today, I should like to point out that, according to information provided by the Minsk city executive committee of the chief directorate for internal affairs, several dozen persons were detained by the police on 19 December 2011 because of their involvement in unsanctioned actions. A number of those persons were released once their identity had been established, while administrative proceedings were initiated against others.

At the present time, our delegation is unable to comment on the situation regarding representatives of the Ukrainian women's movement FEMEN as the relevant Belarusian authorities are currently investigating all the facts surrounding what happened in that connection.

The Belarusian law enforcement authorities have referred to the claims of alleged abduction and beating of activists by the security forces as brazen provocation and officially reported that those authorities were in no way involved in any unlawful acts in this regard.

Let me say a few words about the sanctions and threats that we have once again heard from the European Union and the United States in statements distributed within the OSCE this week.

Our partners are speaking openly of their intention to conduct dialogue with the Republic of Belarus from a position of strength and appear to be proud of this. Sanctions and other restrictive measures have become the norm for the United States and the European Union. No one there appears to give much thought to whether this approach is in keeping with international law and the international commitments of the European Union and the United States or to what this may lead to in the context also of the formation of a global system of law and order. Without wishing to do so, they are making clear to the international community their true political intentions. This is becoming increasingly obvious in the light of the double or even triple standards applied with respect to different countries depending on the political goals pursued.

If we are to be objective, our Western partners must admit that in 2011 many OSCE countries to the west of Vienna experienced a serious deterioration in the way in which OSCE commitments were implemented, first and foremost in the area of human rights.

During the year we have witnessed how peaceful protests have been brutally suppressed in those countries through the use of violence and special equipment, how demonstrations have been dispersed and tent cities dismantled, how torture has been used and prisoners treated inhumanely, how freedom of the media and expression has been restricted, including on the Internet and at the legislative level, how the rights of national minorities have been violated, how members of the Roma and Sinti communities have been subjected to harassment that has come to be regarded as acceptable, and how there has been a clear increase in violent manifestations of intolerance and discrimination, including with regard to immigrants, and an upsurge in anti-Semitism and neo-fascism. I could continue this depressing and worrying list by referring to specific countries and specific examples.

However, on the eve of the birth of Christ I shall refrain from doing so. Instead I should like to wish all my colleagues and their families happiness, good health and prosperity, as well as all the best and every success in our work to establish a spirit of co-operation, dialogue and mutual understanding in the OSCE area.

Thank you, Mr, Chairperson.