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Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Belarus to the OSCE

**STATEMENT BY MR. DENIS SIDORENKO, DEPUTY HEAD
OF THE PERMANENT DELEGATION OF
THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS TO THE OSCE,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 March 2004

Appointment of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Mr. Chairman,

We should like to join other delegations who have already addressed the meeting in offering our congratulations to Mr. Miklós Haraszti on his appointment as OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and wish him every success in this important and difficult post.

The process which ultimately led to consensus on the candidature of the new OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media was difficult, and somehow even painful. Unfortunately, it revealed a number of serious problems in the approaches and methods used by the OSCE in the appointment of senior officials of the Organization, including the directors of its institutions. In our view, the reason for the difficulties that have arisen lies in the absence of clear rules to govern the procedure for the conduct of consultations and presentation of recommendations by the Chairmanship.

At the same time, this process, as we see it, has once again demonstrated the unique nature of our Organization, and the need to seek consensus and take account of the opinions of all participating States. It seems to us that these are key principles, fundamental to all aspects of the OSCE's activities.

It has to be recognized that our experience of the work of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media over the last few years called forth a good many objections from a large number of participating States, including Belarus.

This being so, a vital task at the present time is to restore confidence in the activities of this institution of our Organization: they must be brought into line with the principles and methods of the OSCE's work as a whole and the practical component must receive more emphasis.

We believe that implementation of the mandate given to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media should lie first and foremost not in public criticism of this or that country but rather — as was made clear in the 1997 decision — in “assisting the participating States in their continuing commitment to the furthering of free, independent and pluralistic media”. To fulfil this mandate, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media is bound to develop dialogue and co-operation with all participating States. He must work towards the solution of problem situations and not make conflicts worse through his own actions. In this context it is instructive to observe the positive experience and working methods of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.

We are confident that the new OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media will approach his work in an objective and unprejudiced spirit.

It is particularly important, indeed essential that the work of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media should be better balanced, since problems with the media exist in all countries belonging to our Organization. In monitoring a situation we must avoid selectivity; not only journalists and non-governmental organizations but also the authorities of participating States must be regarded as bona fide sources of information.

We support further development of the thematic project activities of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, which in our opinion should make it possible to identify problems and find ways of solving them on a consensual basis throughout the OSCE area.

We hope that in his work Mr. Haraszti will make a significant contribution to the development of independent, free, professional and responsible media in the OSCE area.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.