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Delegation of Belarus

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

10 January 2008

Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of the Republic of Belarus is happy to welcome the participation of Mr. Ilkka Kanerva, the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, in the work of the OSCE Permanent Council.

We have studied with interest the Finnish Chairmanship's programme of work and vision of our Organization's basic priorities for the period ahead. We are impressed that even at so early a stage as the beginning of the year such an open and businesslike tone has already been struck. We share many of the ideas that have been expressed. A number of the proposals require serious study and detailed discussion.

The OSCE today is experiencing a difficult period connected, among other things, with the need to adapt to new realities. With increasing frequency the question is arising: Can the OSCE accomplish the tasks before it as effectively as is required by contemporary threats and challenges? In that connection we welcome the Chairmanship's readiness to engage in a candid dialogue on issues having to do with the further enhancement of the effectiveness of the OSCE. The most urgent tasks here, in our view, are the completion of the process of turning the OSCE into a fully fledged international organization with its own Charter and international legal personality, the further improvement of the work of the field missions and the drawing up of clear rules governing the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in the area of election monitoring.

We have been struck by the importance the Chairmanship ascribes to work to implement existing commitments and obligations. We believe that this kind of approach must be extended to cover all the dimensions in the work of our Organization.

An essential component of the OSCE is the politico-military dimension together with its key negotiating body, the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC). The results of the Forum's work in 2007 clearly demonstrate that the politico-military dimension has not only lost none of its relevance but has also received a fresh impulse as a result of developments in the politico-military situation in Europe. At the same time, both the position of the Chairmanship and close co-ordination between the work of the Permanent Council and that

of the FSC will be of crucial importance in overcoming the tendencies towards stagnation in the work of the Forum. As you are all aware, Finland will chair the FSC during the last four months of 2008. We are confident that collaboration between the Permanent Council and the Forum will be elevated to a qualitatively new level.

We also recall the active position taken by the Finnish delegation in the FSC regarding the most sensitive issues, such as the renewal and further development of confidence- and security-building measures, small arms and light weapons, and stockpiles of conventional ammunition. It is our hope that the Chairmanship would follow a similar line in its dealings with the politico-military dimension this year, and we are looking forward to constructive co-operation in this area.

We share the opinion that further efforts in the area of border security and management are in the interests of a great many participating States. The involvement in this work of our partners, primarily Afghanistan, will also help to increase stability in the region. At the same time, we think it important to step up co-operation with the appropriate regional organizations that have particular experience in this kind of work. We also view in this same context the OSCE's efforts to combat trafficking in narcotic drugs and we are counting on the Chairmanship's understanding and support as regards initiatives in this area.

Taking as it does a comprehensive approach to questions of security, the Republic of Belarus attaches great importance to the development of mutually advantageous co-operation between OSCE participating States in the area of the economy and the environment. Here, we take the position that the application by some participating States of sanctions and measures of economic coercion against other participating States runs counter to the philosophy of the OSCE and to its fundamental documents and can lead to an intensification of social tension in the participating States, undermine their stability and affect regional security. We note in this connection the intention of the Finnish Chairmanship to assist in strengthening dialogue within the economic and environmental dimension and in placing that dialogue on a more systematic basis.

With regard to the OSCE's human dimension, our attention has been drawn to the Chairmanship's focus on issues of tolerance and non-discrimination. We believe that these issues deserve to be specially discussed at an annual review meeting. We also expect continued discussions aimed at assessing and reviewing the work of the special representatives dealing with the area of non-discrimination.

It is also our view that in 2008 the question of combating trafficking in human beings must remain among our foremost priorities. The special measures planned by the Chairmanship will impart an additional impulse to co-operation in this sphere. We are in favour of further deepening the OSCE's collaboration with other international structures, above all the organizations of the United Nations system, to this end.

Bearing in mind that a fair number of elections are scheduled to be held this year, there is no way of avoiding a serious discussion on all aspects having to do with the organization of elections and the way they are monitored. However, it would be fundamentally wrong to limit the discussion simply to the question of the obligations of the participating States themselves. What is more, considering the serious criticisms that have been levelled at the activities of the ODIHR in this area, including those concerned with the Office's efforts to achieve complete independence from the OSCE's collective bodies, we

consider it necessary to arrange a special meeting to examine how Decision No. 19/06 of the Brussels Ministerial Council meeting is being implemented and to plan the necessary additional measures to that end.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, let me say that, as the Belarusian delegation pointed out at the recent Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid, the strengthening of our common security and the raising of the level of stability in the OSCE area require a strategic vision and an awareness of unity in terms of objectives and responsibilities. It is important that the “confidence deficit” that exists within the OSCE be overcome. There is no alternative to dialogue and co-operation based on mutual respect.

We are convinced that the Finnish Chairmanship has the necessary experience and potential to solve the difficult tasks facing the Organization. For our part we are prepared to lend our support to work along these lines and to assist in it in any way we can.

Allow me to take this opportunity to also express sincere words of gratitude to the delegation of Spain for its positive contribution to the work of the OSCE under the Spanish Chairmanship last year.

Thank you for your attention.