

PC.DEL/240/12
16 March 2012

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

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**

15 March 2012

**Regarding the report by Mr. Janez Lenarčič,
Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

Mr. Chairperson,

We join others in welcoming the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Mr. Janez Lenarčič, and thank him for the information on the work done by the Office and on future plans.

As the report shows, the ODIHR's activities in carrying out its mission are multidimensional.

One of its greatest areas of activity continues to be election observation. Despite the progress made by the Office in widening the geographical scope of its observations, the traditional quantitative imbalance towards countries to the east of Vienna remains, though shortcomings in election organization abound in so-called mature democracies. We believe that a comparative analysis by the ODIHR of electoral systems and practices in all participating States would ensure an objective assessment of the election situation in the OSCE region and would help us to implement our joint commitments.

An analysis of the ODIHR observation missions and the discussion of these in the Permanent Council continue to reveal the lack of a unified approach to election observation in the various OSCE participating States. Yet again, this demonstrates the need to draw up and approve by consensus within the Organization clear regulations and principles for election observation. We expect that, this year, following a discussion of election observation issues at the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, the proposals by a number of Collective Security Treaty Organization Member States will receive their partners' support and we will be able reach a mutually acceptable decision in Dublin.

With regard to other areas of ODIHR activity, we attach importance to the Office's work on democratization and protection of human rights, ensuring freedom of religion and belief, combating hate crimes and improving the situation of Roma and Sinti.

We welcome the development of co-operation between the ODIHR and other OSCE structures in such areas as human rights protection in anti-terrorism work, combating trafficking in human beings and gender issues.

In taking stock of the ODIHR's work, we believe that it should be based on areas approved by consensus, taking the opinions of all participating States concerned into account.

Regarding the observation of trials in Belarus, we should like to stress that the invitation of the ODIHR to perform this observation was a testament to openness on the part of Belarus and to its readiness to co-operate constructively with the OSCE. The Office carried out the observation based on the agreed modalities and with the necessary assistance from the Belarusian authorities. However, the hasty circulation of the ODIHR's report unfortunately made it impossible to ensure a document that was fully balanced in its content and conclusions.

Additionally, we hope that ODIHR expert assessment in the area of trial observation will be called for in other parts of the OSCE region also.

Mr. Chairperson,

We paid special attention to the section of Ambassador Lenarčič's report on plans to reform OSCE human dimension events and believe we must closely heed the opinion of the immediate organizers of these events when it comes to reform in the third dimension. It is important that the ODIHR understand the need for this reform, which is a priority for Belarus and a number of other OSCE participating States. We look forward to the working group beginning its activities and hope that the results will help to streamline the preparation and organization of these events.

In conclusion, we should like to wish the ODIHR Director, Mr. Janez Lenarčič, and his team success in their future work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.