



United States Mission to the OSCE

Closing Reinforced Plenary Any Other Business

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The United States, for several years, has used this agenda item to follow up on the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism concerning **Turkmenistan** and **Belarus**. The United States believes it is important that we continue to use our human rights mechanisms – and that means we, the participating States, need to take action based on the outcomes of the reports and recommendations issued for Turkmenistan and Belarus. Because the conditions that gave rise to invocations of the Moscow Mechanism in these cases are still of concern, my delegation will again address these serious issues. We will continue to follow up, and we encourage the OSCE to remain actively engaged on these concerns until they are resolved.

We welcome the participation of **Turkmenistan** in this meeting for the first time in more than a dozen years. We hope this is a sign that the government is moving forward on human rights issues. The Moscow Mechanism was invoked concerning Turkmenistan in 2003 following hundreds of arrests, show trials, and allegations of torture connected to the alleged coup attempt of November 2002. More than a decade later, many of the individuals arrested at that time have disappeared into the prison system. As we heard from NGOs last week, there are now almost 100 cases of such disappeared persons – including former OSCE Ambassador and Foreign Minister Batyr Berdiev and former Foreign Minister Boris Shikmuradov – and many of these cases involve allegations of torture and abuse. The families of the disappeared have no information on the prisoners' whereabouts, their health, or even if they are dead or alive. Turkmenistan, as an OSCE participating State, committed itself to "ensure that all individuals in detention or incarceration will be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person," and to "observe the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of prisoners as well as the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials." We take note of the statement made by Deputy Foreign Minister Hajiyevev at the opening plenary in which he said Turkmenistan has given information to the United Nations and the European Union about half of the individuals on the list. We ask that Turkmenistan provide participating States of the OSCE with the same information.

Unfortunately, almost five years have passed since the notorious December 2010 post-presidential election crackdown in **Belarus** and subsequent invocation of the Moscow Mechanism. We welcome the August 22 release from prison in Belarus of Mikalai Statkevich, Ihar Alinevich, Mikalai Dziadok, Evgeniy Vackovich, Artyom Prokopenko, and Yuriy Rubtsov. The release of these six individuals is a positive development for the people of Belarus and an important step toward normalizing relations with the United States. Regrettably, however, Belarus has still not acted on most of the recommendations of the report presented by the Rapporteur to the Permanent Council in June, 2011. We again urge the Government of Belarus to review the comprehensive and succinct recommendations of the

report and adopt measures that would guarantee human rights, rule of law, and democracy. We also reiterate our call for the Government of Belarus to restore the political rights of the six individuals mentioned above, and of other former political prisoners. Next week, Belarus will hold its first presidential elections since 2010. We hope they will be conducted according to ODIHR standards, and we will not see another crackdown.

Finally, the United States underlines again the importance of constantly evaluating how the array of OSCE tools, including the Moscow Mechanism, can be strengthened and applied effectively to address persisting as well as emerging situations of concern. It is vital that OSCE tools and institutions are allowed to do their jobs when and where necessary in order to address areas of concern. In this regard, we reiterate the call we have made many times since Russia's occupation of Crimea began: for all participating States to support – and certainly to refrain from obstructing – access to Crimea by OSCE institutions and field operations, including the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.