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**STATEMENT BY
THE PERMANENT DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS
TO THE OSCE AT THE 929th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 November 2012

Regarding the elections in the United States of America

Mr. Chairperson,

It goes without saying that the Republic of Belarus respects the sovereign choice made by the people of the United States of America in the elections held on 6 November.

At the same time, on two previous occasions our delegation has brought up the topic of the current United States election campaign at the Permanent Council in the context of the relevant OSCE commitments and compliance with them within our Organization.

In particular, we have raised a number of concerns regarding the United States electoral system on the basis of preliminary assessments by the OSCE observers. Unfortunately, we have not received a clear response to these concerns from the United States delegation either today or at recent meetings of the Permanent Council. Our concerns relate to the fact that a significant proportion of the population of the United States is disenfranchised, the compiling of voter lists, the setting of the boundaries of electoral districts, voting by fax or mail, the financing of election campaigns and the international observation of elections. This is by no means a complete list of issues, either.

Despite the fact that the Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions of the ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission was made public only late yesterday evening European time and requires additional analysis, we believe it clearly indicates that the election system and the election legislation and practice of the United States are far from perfect and do not fully meet OSCE commitments. In many ways they are contradictory and archaic and, what is more, they do not comply with the democratic principles which the United States has formally promulgated in its external and internal policies.

A clear example of the “democratic nature” of the recent United States elections was the arrest of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates of the Green Party, who protested at the refusal to allow them to participate in the televised presidential debates.

Overall it appears that one of the most significant irregularities identified by the OSCE observers is the lack of a unified election system in the United States. The Federal Election Commission, the consultative body for matters relating to the conduct of elections, remains incompetent. All four Commissioner positions are vacant, the number of employees has been cut and the funding reduced. Furthermore, the House of Representatives of the United States Congress has passed a draft bill on disbanding the Commission and referred it to the Senate for consideration.

At the Permanent Council we have already mentioned the unacceptable situation regarding election observation in the state of Texas. The threats made to the OSCE observation mission and the claims that international observers were not permitted to be present at polling stations were also made by high-ranking representatives of other states – Iowa, Ohio and Oklahoma.

This practice, which has not even been duly assessed at the federal level, is a serious violation by the United States of the 1990 Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE.

Frankly speaking, in the context of such harsh attacks of and threats to OSCE observers by officials of a number of US states, it seems strange that there has been no response from our partners in the Organization, including the member States of the European Union, who usually declare their “adherence to principles” and “consistency”.

We await the final statement from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s observation mission and reserve the right to return to this matter at a future meeting of the Permanent Council.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.