



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement on the Human Rights Situation in Belarus**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 1, 2012

The United States remains deeply concerned about serious violations of human rights, fundamental freedoms and rule of law in Belarus.

We are extremely disappointed with the politically-motivated conviction of Syarhei Kavelenka on February 24 to more than two years of imprisonment for alleged violation of parole. Kavelenka was arrested on December 19, 2011 – on the anniversary of the flawed presidential election. We are deeply concerned about his physical condition, as well as the health of all political prisoners in Belarus.

We note with concern the administrative detention of ten days each for opposition activists Pavel Vinahradau and Alyaksandr Artsybashau for alleged involvement in an unsanctioned protest.

We call on Belarus to release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally, to ensure their full rehabilitation and to stop the ongoing harassment of political activists, civil society representatives, and independent journalists.

Finally, we note with deep regret the Government of Belarus's decision to request that the European Union Head of Delegation and Polish Ambassador to Belarus return to their capitals for consultations, while simultaneously recalling its Permanent Representative in Brussels and Ambassador in Warsaw. These actions, like the expulsion of the U.S. Ambassador to Belarus in 2008 and the closure of the OSCE Office in Minsk in March 2011, only deepen Belarus's self-isolation. The United States joins the EU and its member states in calling on Belarus to end its repression of civil society and the democratic opposition.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.