



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Conviction of Former Interior Minister Yuriy Lutsenko in Ukraine

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

Like the European Union, the United States is disappointed by the February 27 conviction of former Interior Minister Yuriy Lutsenko. We have voiced our concerns about selective, politically-motivated persecutions in Ukraine on multiple occasions, including the prosecution and conviction of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. In addition to Mrs. Tymoshenko, thirteen former senior officials from her government—including four cabinet ministers, five deputy ministers, two agency heads, one governor and the head of the state gas monopoly—have been charged with alleged crimes relating to actions performed in their official capacities, such as abuse of office, excess of authority, and misappropriation of funds.

The politically-motivated prosecution of opposition leaders, including Mr. Lutsenko and Mrs. Tymoshenko, raises serious concerns about the Government of Ukraine's commitment to democracy and rule of law, especially as we look to Ukraine's tenure as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE in 2013.

We urge the Government of Ukraine to free Mr. Lutsenko, Mrs. Tymoshenko, and the other senior former government officials currently in detention, and believe they should have an unrestricted ability to participate fully in political life.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.