



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Belarus Attacks, Draft NGO Laws, Humanities University

As delivered by Acting Deputy Representative James Cox
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 8, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Like the European Union before us, last week we commended Belarus for positive developments there. And, like the EU, this week we regrettably must note several negative developments.

The United State expresses its serious concern regarding the violent attack against General Valeriy Frolov, which occurred July 1. For many reasons, not the least of which was that the attack took place in a compound that is guarded by the militia, this indicates to us that the motive was not robbery, but political. We will follow carefully the details of the investigation of the attack on Mr. Frolov and look forward to what reports Belarusian authorities will provide on bringing the attackers to justice.

The United States also wishes to raise our serious concerns that, after praising Belarus for exhibiting more tolerant attitudes toward the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, new draft laws have been introduced in the National Assembly which affect the ability of NGOs to function and of civil society to develop. The power invested in the Belarusian government to liquidate NGOs for one violation of rules governing the use of foreign grant aid calls into question Belarusian authorities' claims that they are interested in promoting a pluralistic democracy.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, ongoing political pressure against the European Humanities University to the point of removing its accreditation also calls into question statements by authorities that they are interested in providing Belarusian citizens with a diverse education in line with European standards. We look forward to hearing from Belarusian authorities here and in Minsk as to how they intend to ensure that law and practice in Belarus meet European standards.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.