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United States Mission to the OSCE
January 18, 2012

General Statement to the 670th Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation

Madam Chairperson,

The United States regrets that the 2012 Winter Session of the FSC begins on an inauspicious note. The Russian Federation's refusal of a Spanish Vienna Document evaluation visit request on January 6 and a Swedish request on January 11 citing *force majeure* based on "the incompleteness of procedures ensuring the legal implementation of Vienna Document 2011" is unjustified, unacceptable and undermines the object and purpose of the Document. Acceptance of properly notified Vienna Document evaluation visits is a basic obligation that all OSCE states share.

The provisions for the conduct of evaluation visits in the Vienna Document 2011 are an update of the earlier provisions. Publication of the Vienna Document 2011 does not in any way diminish the continuing obligation of all participating states to abide by previously-agreed provisions or any individual VD-Plus decision that was agreed prior to the issuance of the updated Vienna Document itself.

We therefore look forward to a better explanation for the use of *force majeure* to justify refusing these visits. We sincerely hope this was not intended to circumvent the common international understanding that *force majeure* applies to major events that are clearly outside a party's control and which would have been in any case unavoidable by a party's good faith application of due diligence to its obligations.

We request that our statement be appended to the Journal of the Day.

Thank you Madame Chairperson.